

An Ethnographic Case Study of a Residential Field Study Centre.

By

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Abstract

My thesis seeks to extend the field of research on educational visits. There have been many studies of the impacts of educational visits, largely drawing upon quantitative data, such as pre-visit and post-visit surveys. This research, however, focuses upon the evolving processes that occur during a residential fieldtrip. In this study I employ an ethnographic methodology to capture some of the experiences of participating in a residential Geography fieldtrip. More specifically, I undertake a case study of one particular week at a Field Study Centre, accompanying a group of thirty-six A level Geography students and three teachers. By adopting an ethnographic methodology I participate in, observe and recount some of the complex and multi-faceted experiences felt by the participants. Participants also include five Field Study Centre staff, who play a significant part in the evolving relationships. I develop a conceptual framework based around notions of community, exploring how the experience for participants can be equated with belonging to a temporary community. My analysis is shaped around three recurring themes; space, relationships and common experiences. Underlying these are issues of teacher power, conflicting agendas and challenges to school norms.

I argue that the factors of space, informality, shared adversity, teacher control and work all contribute to evolving community feelings during the fieldtrip. I also conclude that the residential experience is widely perceived as fun and provides rich opportunities for social learning.

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Preface

This thesis represents the merging of three of my main professional and academic interests; Geography Fieldwork, Community Studies and Ethnography.

I can still vividly recall my first residential Geography fieldtrip to Llandudno, in April 1986, as an enthusiastic lower sixth form student. On the first morning we awoke to heavy and persistent rain but our teacher, Mr Laithwaite, assured us this would not affect the itinerary. After breakfast, we piled into the minibus and took the short drive along the coast to Old Colwyn. After parking the bus in a car park overlooking the sea (although we could not actually see too much due to heavy cloud and very steamy minibus windows) we were instructed to get our clipboards out. Mr Laithwaite took out his notebook. Remarking that there was no need to clamber out of the bus and get unnecessarily wet, he proceeded to dictate notes to us on the historical development and urban structure of Old Colwyn, Colwyn Bay, Conway and Llandudno for well over an hour – it actually felt like several hours. We then returned to the guest house and copied up our notes into neat. This set the pattern for the week and I remember thinking that there must be more to Geography fieldwork than this. Other memories include the fake excitement at being allowed to have a shandy on the last night and the dumbfounded reaction of Mr Laithwaite at the sight of pupils eating raw onions, in the style of apples, in order to disguise the smell of illicitly consumed alcohol on their breath. For me, the social antics compensated for the uninspiring delivery and actually served to consolidate my passion for Geography.

As a Geography undergraduate I participated in a residential fieldtrip to Wester Ross, to study the biogeography of heaths and woodlands, but my first genuine conversion to the power of residential fieldwork came as a teacher. My first school teaching post was in a challenging 11-18 mixed comprehensive school (the school actually came last in the county when league tables were published for the first time and this coincided with my first term at the school in autumn 1992). With only one small GCSE class and no sixth form Geography groups I made it my mission to try and enthuse the Year 11 students sufficiently to create

a viable sixth form Geography class. As well as a desire to inspire pupils about my subject, I must confess to an ulterior motive. If successful this would give me five hours of A level teaching, which I strongly coveted, whilst also potentially reducing my contact with the more unruly and disaffected key stage 3 pupils. The central feature of my strategy was an A level induction residential fieldtrip – a three day trip after the GCSE exams for interested students, with a mixture of geography fieldwork and leisure activities. I hoped that enjoyment of the experience would sufficiently motivate students to study Geography at A level. The strategy was a success and I secured viable A level groups - of between six and ten students - for each of the five years I taught at the school. Instrumental to this, in my view, was the enjoyment and camaraderie that developed during these trips. When asked (as I frequently still am) what I miss most about teaching in schools, my fondest memories are of residential fieldtrips. These include sixty year old Mrs Davies and her raunchy dancing to ‘Sex on the Beach’ at the evening disco in Provence, the huge water fight at Glandford Mill whilst collecting river data and myself getting left behind by the coach as I collected equipment...but that is another story.

My interest in community studies originated from my time as an undergraduate when I opted to take a module on Rural Geography. This was a broad unit, covering agricultural and settlement changes in Europe, USA and Australia. A central facet was agricultural modernisation and the resultant impacts upon those living and working in the countryside. I became particularly interested in post-war changes in rural Britain, especially linked to the perceived and actual decline of the traditional rural community. I opted to explore one aspect of this within my dissertation and focused upon the growth and impact of second homes on the Isle of Anglesey. I adopted an entirely quantitative approach; administering questionnaires, analysing census and county council data and undertaking statistical testing. A key finding was that second home owners were a significant component within the decline of rural communities, but that they were more likely to be a symptom than a cause (Gee, 1990). I have continued to research and publish articles on second homes and rural communities, largely based upon research in Norfolk and North Wales (Gee, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009).

I first encountered ethnography on the Ed.D summer school in July 2007. We were randomly given an ethnography to read, with the task of reporting back to the rest of the group. I was given 'Karaoke Nights: An Ethnographic Rhapsody' by Robert Drew (2001). With little knowledge of ethnography and even less experience or interest in karaoke I approached the task with reluctant compliance, rather than any form of enthusiasm. However, to my complete surprise, I was totally enthralled by the book and it transformed my research plans. I originally enrolled upon the Ed.D and completed the first three assignments with the intention of researching the use of the Likert scale in course evaluations using a mixed methods approach. I was inspired to experiment with participant observation during summer school fieldwork, and to read a wide range of ethnographies to familiarise myself with the genre and methodology. As a convert to ethnography, I readily migrated towards a study of a residential field study centre.

In the chapters that follow, I attempt to represent the evolving and multi-sensory experiences of being on a residential fieldtrip, considering the extent to which experiences and perceptions equate with notions of belonging to a temporary community. I collected the data during a week-long residential geography fieldtrip with thirty-six AS pupils and their three accompanying teachers at a field study centre, employing observation and semi-structured interviews to gather data. The thesis starts with a series of ethnographic rich descriptions. Firstly I describe the field study centre, its facilities and staff, followed by details about the visiting school, including the pupils and staff on the trip. I then recount my detailed experiences from a single day on the visit. Through these sections I aim to give a flavour of the experience, familiarising the reader with the setting, individuals and routines, whilst attempting to make the unfamiliar, familiar.

Chapter 1

Oaklands Field Study Centre

This Chapter provides background information on the physical setting and characteristics of Oaklands Field Study Centre and the key staff who worked there. This is an important backdrop to many of the events of the week. The text is based upon detailed fieldnotes written at the time of my visit and is written up here in the ethnographic present¹.

The centre is situated less than a mile outside the market town of Wychwood. It is sited in a low lying rural area, eighteen miles north of the nearest city and four miles away from a heritage coastline. Oaklands is a residential field study centre owned and managed by the Local Authority, offering outdoor learning experiences to pupils from key stage 1 to A level. Formerly Wychwood Hall, it was built in 1846 as a private residence for a wealthy businessman and subsequently purchased by the Local Authority and converted into a residential field study centre. Courses range from half days to week long residential visits and the centre is very popular with school groups, many of whom book over a year in advance to secure their preferred dates.

My First Impressions

Driving out of the town and into open countryside, I find that directions to the centre are clearly sign-posted. Within an area of woodland, a well painted white picket fence appears on the left demarcating the front boundary of, what I presume to be, the grounds of the centre. This fence bends round in a curve towards the driveway entrance which is laid with smart pea-shingle. There is a small, slightly peeling, wooden sign with the centre name painted in black letters on a white background affixed to the fence, confirming my expectation. The driveway is gently curving, surrounded by trees on both sides, with overhanging branches. The pea-shingle is soon replaced by poorly maintained tarmac which,

¹ Issues and decisions around my construction of text in the thesis are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

together with regular speed bumps, effectively restricts the speed of my entry. The trees are mature, tall and both deciduous and coniferous in variety. The dense tree canopy severely inhibits the passage of sunlight, creating for me a dark and somewhat foreboding atmosphere as I approach the centre. The drive seems long, although it is only a few hundred yards, but eventually the trees thin out and a large, well maintained lawn appears on the left, behind which is the Hall itself. There is an enormous oak tree in the centre of the front lawn and several large rhododendron bushes on the boundary between the drive and lawn. I suspect my initial impression of foreboding and remoteness would heighten younger students' natural apprehension at going away. However, with sixth form students I wonder whether the rural isolation and woodland 'cloak' might intensify feelings of escapism and create a greater sense of a 'back to nature experience'? Alternatively, it could be perceived as remote from civilization and restrictive to freedom. It may also be that such conditions, either deliberately or unintentionally, are significant in creating what is essentially a bounded setting.

The Hall is a very grand looking Victorian red brick building, with five Flemish style stepped gables to the front façade. There are nine large multi-paned mullioned windows to the first two floors, with small, thin attic windows in four of the five gable ends. Seventeen tall chimney stacks rise from the slate roof, across the whole length of the building, which looks most imposing and impressive. I feel sure that teachers and students alike would be impressed with the grandeur of the front aspect, but question whether this creates a warm and homely atmosphere which I feel might be important in generating community feelings.

The drive sweeps to the left into a large shingle car parking area immediately in front of the Hall. Looking back beyond the drive, on the other side, I notice a large green mobile classroom with a couple of old minibuses parked in front, which I previously failed to see due to the curve of the drive and my pre-occupation with the grandeur of the Hall. This reminds me of the functional practicality of the centre.

Contrasts and Contradictions

I spot two CCTV cameras at either end of the front of the Hall, which are focused on the car park and the front porch. This is the main entrance to the Hall, through cream painted wooden double doors which lead into a mosaic floor tiled porch filled with numerous large pot plants. The porch is large and bright, with a very high ceiling and it feels rather cold. An intercom entry system prevents access beyond the porch, but double half-paned doors provide a glimpse of the entrance hall beyond. Directly ahead is a large fireplace, with a blazing real fire which gives off a most welcoming warmth, combined with the comforting smell of burning wood. The tall, ornately carved mahogany surround and mantle enhance the sense of grandeur, together with the polished, shiny, oak block parquet flooring. There are piles of freshly chopped logs to one side of the large hearth, which is contained behind a high black cast iron fire guard. There is a strong period feel, with a dado rail and cornicing around the whole room; it feels to me rather more like a stately home than a place of study, but equally it feels welcoming. The only real evidence of an educational function is a photoboard of centre staff on a wall adjacent to the fireplace. These head and shoulder photographs name all the employees of the centre, by Christian and surname, together with their job title. The entrance hall is also extremely spacious and light, with a very large double height window to the front aspect, around which a broad staircase starts to wrap. The balustrades are painted white, beneath a pale oak handrail, whilst the stairs have two sub-landings before reaching the first floor.

An unattractive 1960's fire door is placed directly at the top of the stairs, whilst a safety glass partition wall is positioned across the whole length of the galleried landing which overlooks the vast expanse of wooden floor below. The first floor itself is a warren of corridors crossed by self closing fire doors and several small sets of stairs. The flooring is covered in a well-worn red patterned carpet and the walls papered with cream-painted woodchip which is scratched and grubby. The dado rail and coving are painted the same colour, whilst the ceilings, doors, doorframes, and ceiling roses are all off-white. Wall mounted fire extinguishers are regularly located throughout the whole landing and in many rooms. It seems

a shame (although I suppose it is understandable) that health and safety measures have so detrimentally impacted upon the interior, although I suspect they could have been deployed more sympathetically (but with inevitable greater expense). There are a total of fifteen rooms on this floor; six pupil dormitories, two pupil bathrooms, four staff bedrooms, two staff bedrooms and a medical room. At one end is a narrow, tightly curving staircase to the next floor on which there are a further four staff bedrooms and a staff bathroom. In total the Hall has bedspace capacity for sixty-two students and fifteen staff.

Student dormitories are multi-bedded rooms of between four and ten bedspaces. They have a thin, red, industrial type carpet, white walls and bright green/blue patterned curtains which seemed to me rather outdated and appear to clash with the rest of the décor. The ceilings are high, but the beds seem closely packed into the rooms, with a combination of bunk beds and single beds giving a cramped and cold feel. All the beds have black metal frames, with a plastic covered mattress and folded green blanket at the foot. Each bed has a pine veneer bedside cabinet, with a lockable drawer above an open shelf, which according to the Lead Tutor at the centre: “*provides all students with some personal space*”². It strikes me as a rather tokenistic attempt, but I am curious as to how students perceive the distinctions between private and public spaces. The dormitories certainly do not strike me as one of the main selling points of the centre, but I suspect that as an important structural unit they perhaps provide an important basis for student grouping and socialising.

The staff bedrooms, whilst considerably smaller, feel more welcoming despite the same style of décor, beds and bedding. These rooms feel more spacious as they are only twin bedded, with additional modern looking veneered wardrobes, a couple of easy chairs and a sink. The top floor staff bedrooms, in particular, afford excellent views over the formal gardens to the rear of the hall, with their striped lawns and neatly trimmed box hedging. Beyond are views of a lake and woodland, all part of the expansive grounds. The Hall is set in 83 acres, which

² Other people’s voices are written in italics throughout the thesis.

also include a walled vegetable garden and playing fields, together with vast expanses of heathland and grassland.

Overall I am struck by the contrasts between grandeur and functionality and their uneasy juxtaposition.

Facilities for Work and Play

In an annex, across a small courtyard at the right hand side of the Hall, is a games room for the use of visiting students and staff. This white, single skin brick building with 1960's metal window frames jars awkwardly against the majestic grounds and exterior of the main Hall. This room has soft, beige plastic covered, metal framed low slung armchairs - the type often found in old school staffrooms - around the outside of three of the walls, with two table tennis tables and two pool tables in the middle. All the windows are on the entrance wall (the one without any chairs), whilst environmental posters are displayed on the remaining walls. Although slightly drab, I suspect that the facilities and the existence of this space are a welcome addition for the students and some staff, who may like to show off their sporting prowess! It is an informal and welcoming space [which I later noted was used regularly by many students during their free time]³. I wonder, however, whether these quite traditional and social recreational activities are viewed appreciatively by a generation seemingly obsessed with facebook, twitter, bebo, myspace and the Wii?

The main access point for students to and from the Hall is the back door, a wooden red painted swing-door which is located on the far right hand side of the ground floor and opens into the courtyard directly opposite the games room. This door leads into a corridor with a red tiled floor which heads off towards the heart of the Hall and has a series of doors leading off on each side. Wall spaces are covered in displays of pupils' work, which are bright and well maintained. The first doorway on the right leads into the boot room, a spartan space consisting of long low wooden benches and rows of metal coat rails. The ceilings in this part

³ I use square brackets to highlight my retrospective reflections in this Chapter, as distinct from my use of the ethnographic present.

of the building are regular height, whilst the room has white tiled walls and a concrete floor, giving a functional feel. The next door on the right is usually kept closed; the teachers' staff room, a private retreat for the visiting teachers. This is a pleasant room, sixteen feet square which resembles, in mini-form, a typical school staff room – but much tidier. There are half a dozen blue fabric covered easy chairs around a coffee table, a thick blue carpet and mackintosh style red/green patterned curtains. A desk with computer and printer is situated in front of the large six-paned window which overlooks the formal garden to the rear. There is a kitchen corner comprising pine wall and base units, a sink, kettle, microwave, fridge and well stocked coffee, tea and sugar containers. One wall has several notice boards organised by content around the broad themes of practical checklists, policy documents, local attractions and local authority notices. A more unusual feature, compared to the average staffroom, is a redbrick fire place and hearth which houses an electric mock wood burning stove. I suspect visiting teachers appreciate their own private space, where the facilities and environment seem to provide a pleasant and calm retreat.

The next door along the corridor leads into a washing-up room, a very narrow room with a stainless steel industrial sink, extendable tap hose and drainer unit which extends the whole length of the room. The final door on the right is permanently closed and marked 'private'. This is the office of the Lead Tutor, which I only go in on Thursday to conduct an interview. On the left hand side there are two rooms; the first being the kitchen, a large, commercial feeling room with distinct storage, preparation and serving areas and a large central work area. The next room is called the 'snug' and it is used as the staff room for the field centre staff. I note that it seems out of bounds to visiting staff and I wonder how significant this territorial segregation is and whether there are other examples of a 'them' and 'us' relationship between the tutors and teachers? Smaller than the visiting teachers' staffroom, it has similar soft seating and kitchen areas and overlooks the car park to the front. The notice boards are cluttered with booking information, statutory documentation, minutes of meetings and local authority job vacancy lists, with many items pinned on top of previous ones. There are bags, trainers and coats draped on chairs or laying around the room, whilst daily newspapers, book club items for sale and mugs are scattered across a central

coffee table. The room feels homely and well used, but not quite as comfortable or well maintained as the visiting teachers staff room.

Communal Spaces

At the end of the corridor are two half-glazed swing double doors which lead into the entrance hall. There are three large communal rooms which lead off the entrance hall, all grand in scale with high ceilings, large windows and wooden flooring, like the entrance hall itself. These rooms are approached via large, heavy, multi-panelled doors, with brass handplates. The dining room overlooks the front car park and has a large black marble fireplace along one wall. To the right hand side of this, nearer the window, is a big wooden glass fronted dresser housing cutlery and crockery. On the other side is a table with mugs, a kettle, tea, coffee, sugar and a large Dualit toaster for visiting teachers and students to help themselves throughout the day. The back wall, opposite the windows, has a table upon which labelled washing up bowls are positioned for the receipt of dirty cutlery, compost, landfill and liquids. There are wall charts above showing the weight of compost and landfill collected each day, to create a competition between different groups and to draw attention to issues of sustainability. Next to this table is tall fridge, permanently stocked with butter, fruit, various spreads and milk – again with open access for residents at all times. The dining room contains six tables, each covered with a red check plastic coated table cloth and with eight chairs around. In the centre of each table is a printed menu for the day, displayed vertically within a plastic holder.

The library is a long room, extending across the back of the Hall, with three sets of windows looking out over the formal garden. The walls are lined with wooden bookshelves, but they do not appear densely packed with books. Many books are positioned with their front covers facing outwards (rather than their spines), which serves to reveal the dated and somewhat dry nature of most of the stock. In addition to standard text books from the 1980's and 1990's (I can see no more recent material than that), there are some old, but perhaps now collectable, series of books by Ladybird and New Naturalist. The lack of breadth of topics, I would describe most as traditional 'nature' books, is contrasted by good coverage for all

age ranges, from primary to sixth form. On top of the bookshelves which, although above head height, barely reach half the height of the room, are a range of taxidermy specimens in glass cases. These include birds (I note two barn owls), a badger, a fox and various weasels or stoats. The cases seem quite grubby and cobweb ridden, which together with a musty smell, adds to the rather neglected feel of the room. Six large solid wooden tables have been pushed together in the central part of the room to create a large workspace, around which twenty faux leather wooden-framed chairs are positioned. Although clearly not a well used room, it potentially serves as a refuge for individuals, or small groups, wishing to escape from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the centre. [For one group of students in particular, it actually became a significant combined work and social space].

The lounge is a multi-aspect room situated at the far left hand end of the entrance hall, with views over the formal gardens to the rear and playing fields to the side. There is an attractive white marble fire soundboard, above which a white plastic battery operated clock has been positioned. The walls are cream and largely bare, the ceiling is greying, whilst the floor consists of a three foot deep border of polished floorboards and a large central area covered by a thin grey carpet affixed by metal screw-in rods. There is a television/video/DVD player on wheels next to the fireplace and an upright piano in one corner. Around the edge of the carpet, in a 'U' shape focused on the fireplace, are forty of the low slung plastic coated soft chairs also found in the games room. The room feels slightly disappointing to me in that, despite its imposing approach, space and aspect, the overriding impression I am left with is one of blandness.

Formal teaching at the centre takes place in the mobile classrooms situated across the other side of the driveway. These have the feel, appearance, layout and structure of mobile classrooms located in many schools across the country. The rooms are equipped with modern facilities, including interactive white boards and numerous desktop computers, in addition to having storage cupboards, tables and work stools.

My initial impressions of the centre are a place of contrasts; grand and functional, shabby and well manicured, homely and commercial, familiar and unfamiliar, spartan and opulent, detached and connected, abused and respected. These muddled and conflicting messages provide a backdrop to the complex social relations between the resident individuals during the week of 9-13 March 2009.

The Field Study Centre Staff

Sixteen full time and part time employees work within the physical setting of Oaklands. I have identified four, in particular, who play an instrumental part in shaping the residential experience of visiting groups.

Bruce Walker is the Lead Tutor, responsible for all teaching and learning at the centre. A Maths graduate and former secondary school Maths teacher, he left teaching to complete a PhD in Environmental Science. Looking for work in the environmental field he *“stumbled across”* the Oaklands job: *“I mean I’d always wanted to be a teacher and also wanted to work in the environment and the two just kind of came together.”* He has worked at the centre since 2004. Tall, with slightly unkempt light brown medium length hair, he talks passionately and at length on any environmental issue, readily conveyed in an authoritative and knowledgeable manner. He is less secure on the, perhaps more mundane, management, logistical and domestic issues which clearly interest him less. He is fiercely proud of the fact that the centre only employs qualified teachers to lead sessions, adding: *“I think that is something we offer above other field study centres, a very high standard of teaching and that came out in the inspection we had.”*

Bruce is assisted by another full time tutor, Emma Brown, who in her mid 20’s is about ten years his junior. Emma is a Biology graduate who completed a PGCE and did her NQT induction year before taking a temporary job at Oaklands in 2007. This subsequently became a full time permanent post. Emma, with her short dark hair, brown eyes and easy smile is a warm and approachable character, who goes out of her way to assist me. She is also incredibly efficient and very

passionate about the natural environment, so much so that she handed in her resignation for the end of the academic year in order to pursue further academic study. This was clearly a decision over which she had agonised quite hard: *“I found myself doing my dream job, if you like, but I still have still got a kind of niggle just to get more of a background in Ecology so that is why I’m leaving to get an MSc. But I will miss it, it is such a beautiful place to work.”* Bruce and Emma are assisted by two additional part time tutors, and all are readily identifiable by their green polo and/or sweatshirts, with the centre logo embroidered on the left chest.

Dave Peek, the Chef, is an imposing character, standing at least 6’7” tall and well over twenty stone, always dressed in multi-coloured checked trousers, a white chef’s tunic and a bright red chef’s hat. A family man in his mid 40’s, he was delighted to leave the weekend work and late nights of hotel kitchens behind. He gleefully commented that the late shift here finishes at 6 pm. Bespectacled and with a ginger goatee beard, his affable nature and big presence make him an identifiable and re-assuring character about the centre. Moreover, he likes to actively involve himself with visiting schools: *“I like to go and see the teachers and the groups. It is so nice to see them and from my trade in the hotel I never got to see a customer.”* He also revels in the importance of his role, aware of the significance of meals in the overall residential experience: *“When you talk to kids about what they enjoy or don’t enjoy they always mention the food. So on the first night I always try and do something they recognise, so to help them settle in.”* Equally he sees himself with an educational role: *“I once showed this group a barrow full of broad beans from the garden and they thought they were chillies! Some kids have never seen fresh veg straight from the ground.”* He uses as much produce as possible from the walled garden, even combining unusual ingredients in an attempt to get students to try different things. He is particularly proud about his chocolate and beetroot cake: *“I mean it looks strange when you are cooking it, you get this pink glue, but it always goes down well!”*

Sue Smith is the Head Housekeeper who has been employed at the centre for twenty years, making her the longest serving member of staff. Welcoming and cheerful, Sue is eager to talk about her experiences and about changes which

have occurred over the years with anyone who will listen. Short and greying, she wears a red logo-embossed polo/sweatshirt, with black trousers and flat black shoes. She readily confides in new acquaintances, about individuals or events that have happened and seems to enjoy being at the heart of gossip at the centre. Her job is to clean the Hall (including a daily tidy up of the dormitories) and to manage the dining room, including serving the tables. She is sometimes assisted by a team of part-time helpers, depending upon the size of the group in residence. Sue takes her role very seriously and, for example, is meticulous about the positioning of cups, plates and bowls within the dresser. She regularly searches the building for any missing crockery and reports to me on Tuesday morning, in disgust and disbelief, that she has found seventeen mugs in the dormitories. On Thursday afternoon she bursts into the library and reprimands a group of students, whilst they were working, because they have taken a teapot out of the dining room: *“Who’s pinched me teapot. I’ve been worried about that. Lookin’ for it everywhere I have. They shouldn’t go out of the dining room you know. Just you be careful with that. Cost you £25 if you break it. I’m not kiddin’ you! (Laughter)”*.

These staff played a part in the evolving temporary community at Oaklands, forging different relationships with the visiting group and contributing to the diversity of experiences during the week. The next chapter introduces the visiting school group.

Chapter 2

St. Catherine's High School

This chapter provides contextual information about the group of students and teachers who visited Oaklands Field Study Centre and who became the key participants in my research. My study is focused upon the experiences of this particular group during their week long residential fieldcourse at Oaklands.

St. Catherine's High School

St. Catherine's High School is a Roman Catholic, Voluntary Aided Mixed Comprehensive School for pupils aged 11-18, situated in the city of Mountbatten. It was originally founded in 1864 by a team of Sisters for seven pupils, but now has a roll of over 1400, including 400 students in the sixth form. The school is located in the city centre, with both the bus and train stations a short walk away. This accessible location, coupled with the Roman Catholic ethos, results in a very large catchment area which extends throughout the whole county of Yaxfordshire. The school is heavily over-subscribed; it received 412 applications for 200 Year 7 places for admission in September 2008. There are fourteen levels to the admissions criteria (St. Catherine's High School Prospectus, 2009), with priority strongly weighted towards practising Roman Catholics and pupils attending Roman Catholic primary schools. Academic performance is high, by both national and local standards (in 2009, 79% of pupils achieved 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE and 72% achieved 3 A - C grades at A2). This performance enhances the local reputation of the school, which has gained specialist status as a Language College, a Science College, a Training School and an Eco-school.

Typically 200 students enter the sixth form each year to study A levels or the International Baccalaureate, 130 of these coming from the main school and the remaining 70 from a range of other schools. Admission is by application form, with preference given to practising Roman Catholics. A section on the application form requires prospective students to outline what makes them

compatible with the ethos of the school, whilst they must also enclose a copy of their baptism certificate. Academic performance is also taken into account and the school have set a minimum threshold level based upon a points-based system using GCSE results. The sixth form does not offer any vocational courses.

Given this background, the school does not represent a typical secondary school, a fact which is important in my framing of this thesis as a Case Study. Issues around this will be discussed in the methodology section (Chapter 4).

Geography at St. Catherine's

The Geography Department at St. Catherine's is one of the smaller departments, but it enjoys good examination success. In 2009, of 50 GCSE candidates, 84% achieved A*- C whilst the A2 pass rate at A - C was 100% for all 11 candidates. There are four members of staff, including the Head of Department, three of whom came on the fieldtrip. I now provide brief background information on each of the accompanying teachers, again using my fieldnotes made at the time of the visit and written here in the ethnographic present tense.

Dan Halls is the Head of Geography at St. Catherine's and has taught at the school since 1979. A Cambridge graduate, he is not an ambitious career teacher, only reluctantly taking on the Head of Department role following the retirement of his predecessor in 2005. Despite being mature in years, he retains a youthful enthusiasm for life and in particular for environmental issues – a passion he has held since his student days in the 1970's: *"Well I became a Geography teacher really because I was concerned about the environment and I felt the only way to do anything about it was to educate."* One of his proudest achievements was leading the school to permanent Eco-school status and introducing the initiatives associated with that: *"We've got wildlife ponds, we recycle and I'm currently working on an energy monitoring project."* To many, he would appear to be the archetypal Geographer – greying and bearded, with an hooped ear-ring and corduroy trousers. He has a strong passion for fieldwork and the outdoors in general, but he is also a thoughtful, intellectual and cultural individual with a broad range of interests including folk music, theatre, real ale, pubs, local

history, naval history and morris dancing. He also actively displays a breadth of approaches to life and teaching; activist, idealist, critic and romantic. As such he is someone who, without actively courting the respect of pupils, has the knowledge, interests and approach that pupils (particularly sixth formers) readily warm to and admire. [*“Halls, we all love Halls, he’s just a legend”* was a typical comment I overheard]. He clearly seems at home at Oaklands, where the natural setting and grounds, the sustainability agenda and focus on outdoor education appeals to his instincts: *“There is a magic about this place, which infects everybody...it’s like your own private estate.”* As the trip leader (he has been leading St. Catherine’s visits to Oaklands for over a decade) he had already booked the visit for the following year, demonstrating confidence in, and loyalty to, the centre.

Janet Wilkins has taught at St. Catherine’s for six years and is the unofficial second in command within the department. A strong personality, with bright ginger hair and a positive outlook, Janet has opinions on most things and is not afraid to share them with others. She has a particular empathy for students with individual needs and takes unofficial responsibility for pastoral issues on the visit. This is confirmed by Dan who admits: *“I mean, I’m not terribly sympathetic, and I tend not to notice things, but she (Janet) mothers them well, but not too much. She’s also got very good antennae...and she likes gossip. She’s aware of the problems before they happen.”* Of the accompanying staff, Janet perhaps views the educational benefits of the fieldtrip in the broadest context. *“Fieldwork is more than just the academic side”* she comments, stressing the likely future impact on the relationship with her classes. *“It certainly pays off, usually anyway, when we get back to school because they respond much better to us and are much more malleable in a classroom setting – you can have a grown up relationship once they realise you are human.”* Janet has a serious manner and a strong work ethic; she hardly ever sits still or relaxes, she is always busy, actively seeking out jobs or following up on the progress of students, whether academic, social or medical.

Georgina Scott is in her second year of teaching and this is her first visit to Oaklands. Tall, blond and slim, with generous amounts of make-up and eye-liner

she looks an unlikely Geographer. Well spoken, polite, articulate and refined, even when casually dressed in jeans and checked cowboy shirt, she exudes a classy, yet glamorous, persona. Georgia was brought up in the neighbouring county, before moving away to university where she gained a degree in Geography, followed by a PGCE. Initially appointed on a part time contract, this is her first year of full time teaching. Georgina is clearly not familiar with the surroundings or routines of the centre, but uses this to build a shared rapport with some of the students. Conscientious and methodical, Georgina has brought piles of marking with her, *“just in case I get any free time.”*

The personalities, aims and actions of the teachers influence proceedings during the fieldtrip and contribute to the conditions which potentially enable a temporary community to develop.

Fieldtrips to Oaklands

The Geography Department at St. Catherine’s had been running fieldtrips to Oakland’s for ten years, which were compulsory for all students taking A level Geography. In fact they were a selling point in attracting students to study the subject. This occurred formally, via the prospectus, sixth form open evening and teacher promotion, but perhaps more powerfully through informal student networks which spread rumours and stories between year groups. The popularity of this trip in previous years was borne out independently, both by staff and students. Dan, the Head of Department and trip leader, remarked to me during the trip: *“One year the A2 Geographers enjoyed Oaklands so much that they came back and visited us the following year”*. In an interview with students after the trip, when they were enthusing about the experience, one of them commented: *“I’d heard from others the year above that the trip was amazing, and it really was, and it was really unexpected. I’m even thinking of failing the exam so I can go back next year!!”*

Originally, these fieldtrips had been designed to enable students to collect data for the write up of their A level coursework where students focused, in detail, upon one particular topic of interest to them. This was written up as a 5,000 word

project. However, changes in A level specifications resulted in the removal of the coursework component, replaced instead by a Skills Examination Paper. This exam focuses upon the techniques and broad considerations involved in the collection and analysis of geographical fieldwork data. It requires a working knowledge of different data collection techniques, an awareness of their limitations, an understanding of health and safety issues and an appreciation of appropriate methods for displaying and analysing different types of data (AQA, 2009). Consequently this particular trip had a slightly different focus to previous visits, namely to prepare students for their examination in June 2009. This resulted in a broader range of field experiences during the visit which included a heathland study, a river study, a tourism study and environmental quality indices. The teachers were also conscious of the social benefits of fieldtrips, both in terms of improving teacher-student relationships and in gelling the groups. This particular year neither of the two classes had gelled very well and the teachers hoped this would improve as a result of the trip. These issues of student peer relationships and teacher-student relationships became an important focus for me throughout the week and they are analysed in detail within this thesis.

In the next chapter I focus upon one particular day from the fieldtrip, illustrating some of the events and interactions between the centre staff and the visiting school group, within the context of a residential Geography fieldtrip based at Oaklands field study centre.

Chapter 3

A Day at Oaklands

There is no such thing as a typical day on a residential fieldtrip. Every trip is totally unique, dependent upon numerous factors including the participants, the places visited and incidents arising. On any given trip all days are also different, in terms of content, format, experiences and relationships between individuals. In this chapter I describe a single day from the fieldtrip (10 March, 2009) in an attempt to give insights into what it felt like as a member of the trip, in addition to identifying routines. The intention is to provide further context, in the form of a rich description, to supplement the descriptions of the buildings and the individuals in Chapters 1 and 2. I wish to give the unfamiliar reader a flavour of the experience at this point in the thesis, building familiarity, before locating my thesis in relation to current research and introducing a conceptual framework for my analysis. Nonetheless, in this chapter, I start to signpost the emerging ideas which potentially support my notion that a temporary community can develop on a residential fieldtrip. The chosen day is midweek (Tuesday), so as to avoid the more disjointed arrival and departure days. Also this captures the atmosphere at a stage when centre specific relationships are still in their early development. Again, content is derived entirely from my fieldnotes made at the time and I write in the 'ethnographic present' to draw the reader into the experience and to give authenticity to my presence.

The Morning Routine

I slept well at Oaklands. Although the bedroom was spartan and the bed itself rather unappealing, I was so physically exhausted at the end of the day that I quickly fell into a deep sleep. I am awoken by the repeated ringing of a handbell, to signify it is 7.30 am and time to get up. It always feels like an early start, having to drag myself out of bed rather than feeling ready to get up, although I am looking forward to the day ahead. As I walk down the stairs into the main entrance hall it is eerily quiet and deserted, except from the crackles of wood burning in the open fire – accompanied again by that exquisite smell of burning

logs. I push the heavy, spring loaded door to the dining room, whereupon I am greeted by a sense of lethargic activity and the low level hum of movement and quiet chatter. It is now 8.05 am. I am five minutes late for the scheduled start of breakfast but it is immediately obvious that the room is only about half full. Selecting the table nearest the door, I attempt to integrate myself into the scene discretely. Each table is laid with crockery and cutlery, a milk jug, butter and jam and a small selection of large healthy-option cereals boxes. Tea/coffee are self service from the table next to the fireplace, where there are also loaves of bread beside the toaster. There is a strong smell of burnt toast, where someone has obviously put on some toast and wandered away. I note that two of the teachers, Dan and Georgina, are sat at different tables, both independently engaged in chatter with students on their tables. My table is generally subdued – there are only four chairs of the eight taken (excluding mine). I enquire about their night's sleep; responses indicate that they would have wished for more, that the beds were uncomfortable, there was joking annoyance at the ringing of the bell and some hilarity over the antics which occurred after lights out at 12.00 am, when the teachers had gone to bed.

Janet, the remaining teacher, enters the room with some more students – she has been round all the dormitories ensuring everyone is awake and hurrying up those who were not yet ready. She was also checking up on the condition of a student who was ill in the night, and another who has an on-going knee problem. At 8.15 am Sue (the Head Housekeeper) enthusiastically breezes in calling out “*Who's for scrambled eggs?*”, carrying about four plates of eggs on toast, the numbers for which were pre-booked at the previous evening meal by a show of hands. After three or four journeys, the hands up have all disappeared, yet more plates keep arriving. She calls again for more takers – I hear some murmurings about the unappetising appearance causing a change of mind. Sue tries again, but still with no takers. In obvious frustration, she deposits the plates on the table with the waste buckets and goes into the kitchen for even more plates. At this point Dan gets up, moves over to the unclaimed food and intercepts Sue on her return. He thanks her for the breakfasts, suggesting that there are still a few more students to come and assures her that he will sort out the distribution of the

remainder for her. She heads out slightly disgruntled and I receive a wry smile from Dan who has caught my gaze.

As some students are still arriving, Dan is bombarded with the first calls of: “*Can we go when we’ve finished Sir?*”, “*I can’t eat any more of this – it’s too early*”. He makes a vain attempt to offload some plates of scrambled eggs, and then reminds all students that it will be a long and physical morning and that this is the last chance to eat before lunch at 12.30 pm. Janet takes responsibility for ensuring that all students have cleared away their own crockery before leaving and to remind them to be in the classrooms ready for a 9 am start. [Establishing familiarity and routine are important for the smooth operation of communal living, but I also suggest that they are potentially significant in developing community sentiments]⁴.

Different Perspectives

At around 8.30 am Emma, the field centre tutor, enters the dining room and takes a seat next to Janet to discuss the format of the day. (Centre staff do not live on-site, in fact both Bruce and Emma have a forty minute daily commute). Janet makes it clear that she wishes to lead the first taught session, with Emma to cover site specific issues. Janet is also quite prescriptive about which sites she wants to visit, with a desired emphasis on detailed data collection at many different sites. This appears to go against the suggestion of Emma (based upon the standard Oaklands rivers field-day) where there is a systematic overview of the course of the river, including visits to the source and mouth, as well as data collection at several sites. Emma accepts the suggestions of Janet and heads off to the classroom to make final preparations. By 8.45 am there are only a handful of students left in the dining hall, together with all three school staff, who by now have all moved together onto a single table. They are discussing the final arrangements for the day, including staggering times for each classes return for lunch.

⁴ I analyse these factors in Chapter 11.

At 9 am I head for the classroom, where Emma and Janet are still discussing the details of the day. Resource booklets are distributed on each of the blocks of tables and as students enter Janet requests that they sit in groups of three or four. Pupils are still generally subdued; one group of four lads are missing and Janet heads off to find them – a student reports that they were “*hanging out*” in the games room. Once they have been rounded up, Janet begins the session by introducing the focus for the day, a river study. She delivers a thirty minute introductory talk, in a serious tone, during which the students are generally focused and attentive. Topics covered include health and safety considerations, linked to both risk assessments for the day and to possible examination questions. Janet then passes over to Emma who runs through the booklet (see Appendix A), explaining the field techniques and procedures to be carried out. The sample sites to be visited are looked up on Ordnance Survey map extracts. This phase is slightly more interactive, interspersed with question and answers. Throughout there are regular interruptions from Janet, to reinforce the tasks set: “*I have been to a meeting with the Chief Examiner – everyone must fieldsketch at every location.*” At 9.45 am, with everyone briefed, Janet concludes the session by reminding students to take their booklets and clipboard, to wrap up warm, collect their coats and wellies, go to the toilet, fetch a flask of soup from the kitchen (which Sue has been preparing and organising) and to meet by the minibuses in ten minutes.

The students meet and allocate themselves to a minibus; I select one of the Oaklands buses and take the front passenger seat. There is chatter between most students, in small groups, based around their chosen seats. The three students behind me are talking about the standard of accommodation, with reference to the “*disgusting mattresses*” and the bathwater which “*came out piss yellow – it was well rank*”. It is at least ten minutes before Janet and Emma appear, although no reference is made by them, or the students, about their lateness. On the journey to the first site, the students are keen to ask Emma about internet access. Some have discovered that with an access code they will be able to go online and access wi-fi. Emma initially tries to deflect the issue: “*Guys you can cope for a week without the internet*”, but with more persistent questioning she passes responsibility onto the teachers from the school: “*Miss Wilkins and Mr Halls*

think that you do not need it.” [This section raises questions over possible different perspectives between the teachers and tutors over issues of content, delivery and the wider student experience.]⁵

In the Field: Common Experiences and Goals

On arriving at the first site, Janet and Emma unload the fieldwork equipment and medical kit (which Emma had collected from the store and loaded onto the buses whilst we were finishing breakfast) whilst the students disembark with cameras and clipboards, putting on their wellies and coats. A freshly killed bird is lying in the middle of the lane and as the occasional vehicle passes there is mild excitement at the prospect of the bird being squashed further, whilst a final briefing talk is being delivered. Each group is instructed to collect their required equipment (a tape measure, two ranging poles, a stopwatch and an orange).

There is a short walk along the lane to a small bridge from where there is access to the river. Emma is the first to enter the river, which she reports is flowing faster than usual, but is still safe to enter despite feeling very cold. The channel is narrow and shallow at this point, approximately two metres wide and up to 30cm deep. The students enter in single file, with occasional squeals at the temperature - to great hilarity from the rest. Janet broadcasts that she has discovered a hole in her wellies and some students are keen to get a picture of “*Miss in the river in her spotty wellies.*” The students all assemble around Janet and Emma who jointly give a five minute practical demonstration of how to use the equipment and record the data. The six working groups then spread themselves out within the river and begin the task of measuring the width, depth, wetted perimeter and velocity; one person from each group remains on the bank recording data that is called out. Janet and Emma independently wade up and down stream between the groups, advising and assisting. Roles have been devised so that everyone is actively engaged within each group. There is loud amusement in one group when Janet spots that they have misread the scale on the tape measure, recording a width of 8m rather than 3m.

⁵ These issues will be explored within the analysis in Chapter 10.

I am struck by the high levels of co-operation within the groups and the purposeful working atmosphere, so much so that they seem oblivious to the cold which I am certainly feeling, despite thinking I was well equipped. After forty-five minutes most groups are starting to finish, whereupon they are told to return to the bus and to drink their flask of soup. A few lads opt to play pooh sticks over the bridge by the roadside before heading back. As I climb into the bus I am struck by a strange, strong smell, to be informed that: "*the soup is disgusting, but we drunk it anyway.*" The radio is turned on, and there is hearty singing along to 'poker face' by Lady Gaga. It takes a while for all students to return and for everything to get packed away, ready to head off to the next site, which is a short drive away.

The minibuses pull up alongside the river and without prompting students eagerly disembark, automatically collecting the necessary equipment ready to repeat the data collection. Janet and Emma consult over the safety of the site, wading in to check the water depth and speed of flow. Students, restlessly watching from the side, amuse themselves watching a group of fighting ducks: "*Come on Miss, can we get in yet?*" It is decided that in places the river is too deep, so an improvised arrangement is thought up whereby the class is split into half and data collection is conducted by two large groups. Janet is keen to emphasize that the data will still be statistically viable. The site is very open and together with larger working groups the atmosphere is more buoyant and cheerful: "*This is way more fun than the other place*", one student remarks. Janet recalls last year, when she was at this site, there were a group of ducklings and speculates with a group of students that they may be the ducks that were playing earlier. Data is collected quickly, as students are familiar with the process and the larger groupings make for more helpers. One student gleefully recovers an old number plate from the river which he is keen to take back as a souvenir. I find the water very cold, but it takes at least twenty minutes before the first student remarks about this calling out: "*My feet are slowly but surely dying.*" As the first group finish their measurements they are asked to draw fieldsketches, whilst waiting for the other group. By now it is 12.30 pm and it is obvious that Emma is keen to hurry up the group still measuring. She offers both vocal encouragement and active participation, taking over the river depth reading task herself, which

greatly hastens the process. Once everyone is out of the water she quickly ushers everyone back onto the buses. She makes a quick (and apologetic) phone call back to the Centre, explaining that they will be slightly late back for lunch. On the way back it transpires that 12.30 pm was the previously arranged time with Sue, the Head Housekeeper, adding that: *“She is a bit of a stickler and it pays to try and keep her happy, although that is rarely possible!”* Overall I feel that it was a productive morning, with a common purpose and work ethic – sentiments which, I suggest, are potential community building ingredients.

Lunchtime: An Opportunity for Freedom and Space

We arrive back at Oaklands by 12.45 pm and students are instructed to head straight for the dining hall where there is no sign of Sue. Cling film wrapped sandwiches, cake and a bowl of fruit are laid out on the tables in centrally placed trays, into which the students heartily tuck in (despite comments on my table that it does not appear very appetising). In the absence of Sue, Janet takes it upon herself to serve the soup, circulating between tables. Emma is not about either, she has gone to the ‘snug’ to eat her own packed lunch (she once rather resentfully informed me that staff do not even get lunch provided and she only gets a free evening meal if she works late). I am hungry and cold, so the warmth of the centre, the delicious smelling soup and even the egg on white sliced bread sandwiches (which were the only variety left once I sat down) were well received. I sense a consensus on this around my table, whilst there is minimal chatter as students heartily tuck into their lunch. Within fifteen minutes the majority of students have eaten all they can manage and even before Janet has sat down, there are requests from students to head off for some leisure time around the buildings and grounds. Janet agrees, stressing that they must be back on the minibuses and ready to leave by 1.30 pm. When I subsequently wander around, I discover students all across the site. Two groups are outside playing with a football and frisbee respectively, whilst there are more students actively engaged in a variety of activities in the games room. Four students are sitting around the fire, which is still giving out heat from the embers, whilst three linger in the dining hall throughout the lunchtime period, chatting with Janet as she finishes her lunch. The remaining students, I presume, have gone off either individually

or in groups to their dormitories. Within the structured routine and the confines of the site I note that there are opportunities for individuals and groups to use space and time creatively⁶.

In the Field: Shared Adversity

At 1.30 pm I head back to the minibuses, where some students are showing each other pictures on their phones or cameras of family, friends, pets and holidays, whilst Janet and Emma are having a final consultation over the schedule for the afternoon. We drive to the third sampling site, again further downstream the river's course. Parking and access is via a complex of barn conversions so students are reminded to disembark swiftly and quietly to respect the peace and privacy of residents. There is a wide, flat floodplain at this site and the original six groups are able to spread out in order to collect data. The river is deemed safe to enter, but as students wade across they all find that the water is deeper than their wellington boots. There is widespread hilarity at this, encouraged by both Emma and Janet, amid shrieks of genuine shock at the coldness of the water. Emma suggests: "*Getting wet is all part of the experience*" whilst Janet ironically starts to sing: "*We're all going on a summer holiday.*" Data collection is generally purposeful, although there is an increase in splashing between students in the water as they increasingly become resigned to getting totally soaked through. Janet happily takes photographs from the bank, alongside some students holding tape measures and others noting down data called out by those taking measurements within the river. Talk on the bank turns to the next day, a visit to the nearby town, and plans are hatched to visit the chip shop. Food and chips dominate student conversations across two groups, for at least ten minutes, before Emma intervenes in an attempt to refocus the students onto the task in hand: "*There is more to tomorrow than just chips, it's about questionnaires and ...*" At this point she is interrupted by a student calling out: "*Yeah, you're right, it's about arcades as well...(Laughter)*". The pervading convivial atmosphere, however, does not impinge upon the fieldwork which is completed efficiently and thoroughly – a point not lost on Emma and Janet who both independently

⁶ I explore these ideas in Chapter 9.

comment to me about the attitude and commitment of the students, despite the increasingly cold wind and the wet clothes of many.

On returning to the minibuses, there is a forty minute drive to the final site, a sluice gate over the river near to the mouth, passing through attractive countryside and picturesque villages. These surroundings prompt a student conversation around the issue of rural living, which engages the front half of the minibus. Whilst there is some clear appreciation for the area: *“It’s really nice and that, but I need more people and things going on”*, there is strong support for the merits of urban living. One student expresses concern at the prospect of a getting a dirty car stressing, to laughter from his peers, that: *“the roads around here are filthy!”* Upon disembarking at the final site there is a walk along a ridge, from where the mouth is visible. Emma delivers a talk on the observable geographical features, including a meander, a floodplain and a distant spit. Janet chats over Emma, in conversation with individual students, before delivering her own talk with a focus on data collection difficulties and solutions at this specific location. After standing and listening in an exposed position for nearly half an hour, I begin to sense strong murmurings of student discontent and these are confirmed by comments I overhear during the walk back to the buses: *“I’m so looking forward to taking this crap off”* and: *“I just want to go back and get something to eat.”* The journey back is quiet; students are generally subdued as tiredness kicks in over the thirty minute drive back to the Centre. After emptying the minibus, students have an hour free until the dinner bell at 5.30 pm, for recreation or relaxation. Emma however has to clean and put away all the equipment noting that: *“...in a school you would have a technician, or support of some kind to do all of this hidden work.”* Janet makes for the staffroom for a coffee and a catch up with her other teacher colleagues, Dan and Georgina, who have been with the other minibuses, visiting the sites in a different order. I was impressed by the camaraderie shown, in difficult working conditions, and sense that this shared adversity may potentially be contributing to feelings of mutuality.⁷

⁷ I analyse arguments around this issue in Chapter 11.

The Evening: Scope for Individual Preferences

At 5.30 pm precisely, Sue rings the handbell to permit entry into the dining hall. Dave, the chef, assists Sue in carrying the food to tables and readily engages in banter with students over portion sizes, the weather and officiousness of Sue, who is asking after seven missing cups from her dresser. The food is warmly received on my table, although partially out of necessity rather than the nature of the meal: *"I could eat anything. I'm permanently hungry here Miss"* one student remarks to Georgina. Chatter around the table revolves around food, hunger and events of the day, with individuals from the different minibuses recounting their experiences – the dead bird and getting soaked featured prominently from students on my bus. By 6.15 pm the dining room is clear of students and the school teachers are sitting together discussing plans for data analysis in the evening. Emma has gone home by now, leaving the teachers to run their own taught sessions in the evening. I note a sense of relief at this, with the opportunity to focus upon exactly the agenda they want. At 7 pm I meet in the classroom, where Janet talks through the calculation of discharge and the procedures for graph drawing and cross-section construction, modelling examples on the whiteboard with data from a previous year. She insists that these must be completed for each sample site by every student individually before they are free to go. This incentive makes for a purposeful working environment, but with an atmosphere of informality from the freedom to go and fetch tea/coffee as required and to stop and chat along the way. The lack of pressure from a fixed time limit (unlike lessons at school) also makes Janet more relaxed, she says, as she is able to ensure that the work is completed before releasing students, without the necessity of constantly nagging them due to an impending bell signifying the end of a lesson. Some students are clearly incentivized by the prospect of free time (with plans hatched to order a Chinese take away) and according to Janet are working far harder than they ever do at school. Others are content to make a full evening of the work, happily interspersing the tasks in hand with chatter, with the result that they remain in the classroom until after 10 pm with Janet.

To my slight surprise, the favoured focal point for at least ten students after they have finished work is in the entrance hall, where a group of lads are kicking

around a sponge ball in an improvised game of football. Several others are sitting around the blazing fire, where both Dan and Georgina are also sitting, deep in philosophical conversation about religion. The games room is another popular location, with the same crowd of students who regularly use the facilities there during any free time. These two locations account for all but one of the eleven boys on the trip. I subsequently (discretely) ask Dan about the likely whereabouts of the remaining male student, to be told that he would most certainly be reading alone in his dormitory. Official bedtime is 11 pm, at which time the students are asked to return to their dormitories. Dan goes round ushering students out of communal areas, turning off lights, locking external doors and checking windows. Janet and Georgina meanwhile visit all the dormitories, to account for everyone and to encourage them to go to sleep in anticipation of another busy day ahead. By this time I am relieved to take the opportunity to head off to bed myself. Before going to sleep I read through my notes from the day and reflect that the evening was an important time for data collection, when I witnessed multiple social interactions and variations in the use of space and time⁸.

In this chapter I have shared my experiences and perceptions from a single day of the fieldtrip. This rich description offers my personal insights and is intended to make the strange more familiar to readers without such first-hand experiences. Moreover, I signpost some of the issues and themes which inform the forthcoming analysis chapters. Before considering these, I propose to contextualise the methodology I have decided to employ in this research study by reviewing the field of ethnography.

⁸ These sub-themes form the basis of two separate analysis sections – Chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 4

Contextualising my Study within the Field of Ethnography

The first ethnography that I read (Drew, 2001) proved to be an inspiring and defining moment. It revealed to me the potential of ethnography as a research methodology for my own thesis, whilst also demonstrating the accessibility and power of the resulting text. I was inspired to read a number of different ethnographies to familiarise myself with some of the complexities of the methodology and the genre. This chapter presents a review of literature on ethnography as a methodology and its practice, considering changing approaches in relation to reflexivity, purpose, the use of senses and representation. I examine changing ideas about what is studied and consider previous ethnographic research in bounded and communal educational settings. I then reflect on the implications of these debates for my own thesis, which I am framing as an ethnography.

What is Ethnography?

There is no clear or convenient standard definition of ethnography; it is a term which has been interpreted differently over time across a variety of contexts. My first encounter with an ethnographic text provided me with a concise interpretation, which served as a helpful starting point:

“Ethnography is the research method of observing and participating in human associations in their natural settings.” (ibid, 2001, p24)

This aligns the term with the interwoven processes of participation and observation, which are constituent elements in many interpretations (see for instance, Bryman, 2004, p292; Delamont, 1992, p7; Heath & Street, 2008, p31; Roberts et al, 2001, p3). Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) suggest that ethnography originated from mid-nineteenth century Western anthropology, where it referred to a descriptive narrative of a community or culture. The subsequent work of Malinowski (1922) is regarded as significant in that it first linked participant observation with interpretations based upon theory (Ellen,

1984). This is still regarded as a central feature of ethnography, exemplified by the definition of Roberts et al who suggest it:

“combines both an experiential element in which ethnographer participate in the life of a community, and an intellectual element, in which theoretical concepts are used and then developed in order to write culture.” (2001, p3)

According to Heath & Street (2008), ethnography is a theory building enterprise in which ethnographers construct, test and amplify theories through the systematic observation, recording and analyzing of human behaviour. The requirements for intensive fieldwork and first hand involvement are also inherent in many interpretations, often associated with prolonged periods of ‘immersion’ in a ‘new culture’ (Delamont, 1992). Atkinson & Delamont (1990) referred to ‘ethnographic imagination’ as a way of viewing people’s lives based upon an intense engagement with them. Equally there is a focus upon the outlook of informants in their own setting and on attending to the everyday ‘taken for granted’, in order to build understanding of people’s meanings (Wolcott, 2001). This involves developing empathy with ‘the other’, to apprehend their views, feelings and experiences (Roberts et al, 2001). This represents *emic*, or insider knowledge, which according to Agar (1996) the ethnographer blends with an *etic*, constant comparative, perspective. Some of the issues relating to capturing the reality of the social world have been incorporated into philosophical debates, and I examine these in the following section.

Capturing Reality?

Ethnography faced a positivistic critique in the mid-twentieth century, focused around a perceived lack of scientific rigour and a reliance on subjective impressions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Some ethnographers sought to counter this with an approach rooted in nineteenth-century Biology; naturalism. According to Matza this is:

“the philosophical view that remains true to the nature of the phenomenon under study.” (1969, p5)

meaning the social world should be studied in its natural state, undisturbed by the influence of the researcher. Naturalism supporters argued that the social world could not be understood in terms of simple causal relationships, since human

actions are influenced by numerous factors including culture, motivation, beliefs, perceptions, values and discourses. As such they contend that causal analysis is inappropriate, since human behaviour is a construction based upon the particular circumstances an individual finds themselves in. Through participant observation, the researcher can learn the culture of their informants and in turn come to understand their meanings and behaviour (O'Hear, 1996). Even in settings where the ethnographer is familiar, the advice was to treat it as 'anthropologically strange' (Delamont, 1992), in order to eradicate any preconceived ideas. Nonetheless, this approach of excluding the researcher in an attempt to preserve objectivity has been critiqued, with doubts raised over the viability of avoiding influence or representing reality in a way that is value neutral. This view, 'philosophical hermeneutics'⁹ (Dostal, 2002), sees ethnographic research itself as a construction, with assumptions and interpretations influenced by the culture and background of the researcher. If accepting this position, there is no independent domain of 'natural reality'. Furthermore, the notion of 'deconstruction' (Derrida, 1976) questions the ability of ethnographers to capture meanings on the basis of actions, since these are not stable properties, whilst also suggesting that ethnographic writing is not a transparent medium through which reality can be seen¹⁰. Denzin & Lincoln (2003) argue that from the late 1980's, when the postmodern period for ethnography emerged, objectivity and a neutral stance were largely abandoned. Experimental ethnographies evolved, including research from a particular political standpoint or interest group (e.g. feminist ethnographies) together with ethnographies conducted in a variety of ways, including auto-ethnography and visual ethnography. The former approach explicitly focuses upon the introspective feelings, thoughts and emotions of the researcher, in constant interaction with the ethnographic culture under investigation (Ellis, 2004). Visual ethnography (Pink, 2001) involves the prominent use of visual approaches in observation, analysis and representation and is not necessarily reliant upon sustained immersion in a social setting. However, Bagley (2009) suggests that

⁹ Philosophical hermeneutics, developed by Gadamer (1976), challenged nineteenth century approaches to recovering intended meanings by the author, by seeking to understand their interpretations.

¹⁰ Debates around the construction of text are addressed later in this Chapter.

rapid and recent global and cultural changes raise questions over how well educational ethnography captures analyses and portrays:

“the sensuous array of sights, sounds and smells as well as ... the traumas, passions and emotions of twenty-first century lived experiences?” (ibid, p252)

Consequently he calls for a shift in ethnographic methodological boundaries to encompass more emphasis on sensory working (Bagley, 2008). Sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009) responds to this, in that it seeks understandings of experiences, practice and knowledge using all five senses, whilst acknowledging that they are inter-connected. According to Pink (2009) sensory ethnography adopts the principles of emplacement and embodiment whereby the researcher learns and knows through their experiencing body, within a sensorial material environment. Consequently, sharing activities and practices contribute to understanding and represent the “emergent methods that are defining the new sensory ethnography as it is practised” (ibid, p9-10).

There have been significant changes in the understanding of reality through ethnographic knowledge, from early desires to exclude researcher subjectivity, to current approaches in which the ethnographer shares multi-sensory experiences and knowledge with their research participants. It is the latter which characterises the approach I have adopted in my research.

Reflexivity

According to Pillow, reflexivity is:

“an on-going self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research.” (2003, p178)

The posthumous publication of Malinowski’s field diaries in 1967 (revealing him to be imperialist and racist) prompted strong reactions and launched a move towards critical self-awareness on the part of the ethnographer (Tedlock, 2000). The resulting reflexivity included the documenting of interactions between the researcher and the researched (Ellen, 1984). Furthermore, reflexivity responds to the issue that social researchers are part of the environment they study and therefore they potentially cannot help but avoid “contaminating” their data.

However, rather than eliminating or ignoring such effects, Schuman (1982) suggests the reflexive researcher should strive to reflect upon their influence.

Nonetheless whilst:

“recognition of reflexivity implies there are elements of positivism and naturalism which must be abandoned; ... it does not require rejection of all the ideas associated with those two lines of thinking.”
(Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p15)

As such, ethnographic analysis often entails moving between the perspectives of the researcher and researched, seeking to understand their inter-relationships (Delamont, 1992). Equally, human behaviour is not stable, nor consistent, and varies between contexts within which the researcher is constituent so such analysis is important. Reflexivity acknowledges researcher subjectivity in both collection and representation of ethnographic knowledge and I explore ideas relating to the latter in the next section.

Writing Ethnography

Writing is a central activity to ethnography, both in the field and subsequently. Sanjek (1990) suggests it is a method of enquiry that moves through successive stages of self reflection, from fieldnotes to the research text, to the public text for the reader. In each stage the writer, as interpreter, alters the text and shapes a written construction which makes a claim to authority, with the text functioning as a source of validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Original fieldnotes are often piecemeal and rough, designed to be a database for subsequent writing (Sanjek, 1990). However when jotting down fieldnotes, there is an assumption that lived experience can be captured (Bochner & Ellis, 1996). This being so, “the flow of action and discourse has been interrupted, turned to writing” (Clifford, 1990, p51) and “the present moment is held at bay so as to create a re-contextualised, portable account” (ibid, p64).

Whilst such views question the status of fieldnotes, concerns also surround the resultant texts. Traditionally the anthropologist was perceived as superior to the research participants, but postmodern challenges to this view have had implications for ethnographic text:

“The writing and reading of ethnography are overdetermined by forces ultimately beyond the control of either an author or an interpretative community. These contingencies – of language, rhetoric, power and history – must now be openly confronted in the process of writing.” (Clifford, 1986, p25)

There has been increased consciousness around the power politics of representation that surround ethnography, with suggestions that ethnographies are in fact “hierarchical arrangements of discourses” (ibid, p17). This relates to questions such as who has the right to represent whom, whose discourse is privileged in the text, and who decides the choice of words and interpretations¹¹ (Clifford, 1986).

The ‘crisis of representation’

Wolcott (2001) suggests there is a problematic relationship between the process of ethnographic research and the product of ethnographic writing, which Denzin & Lincoln (2003) referred to as a ‘crisis of representation’. Essentially this challenges the potential of ethnographic text to adequately represent social and cultural phenomena:

“The worded word never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world.” (Richardson, 2003, p500)

She suggests that writing is always partial, local and situational and the self is always present. Consequently, perceptions pass through the personal lens of the researcher with all the individual assumptions and thought processes they hold (Ellen, 1984). Thus the resulting text is the result of ‘objectivization’, whereby data is simplified or manipulated such that the “original ethnographic confrontation is destroyed” (ibid, p11). Bochner & Ellis suggest that experience is actually created in the text by the researcher:

“We necessarily invent and construct the cultures we write about. We cannot help but read something into what is there, because we are there with it.” (1996, p20).

Richardson also claims:

“All knowledge is socially constructed. Writing is not simply a ‘true’ representation of an objective ‘reality’; instead, language creates a particular view of reality.” (Richardson, 1997, p26)

¹¹ Dilemmas over the dominance of my own voice and issues around the voices of others are discussed in Chapter 5.

Clifford took a more extreme view and suggested that ethnographic writing should be regarded as fiction, since “something is made or fashioned” (Clifford, 1986, p6) and ethnographic texts are only “made possible by powerful lies of exclusion and rhetoric” (ibid, p7). Ethnographic narratives, which include plots, characters, dialogue and settings, often employ literary devices shared with fictional writing (Richardson, 1997). Equally, interview transcripts may be presented out of sequence, whilst the identities and characteristics of individuals are often altered, if only to preserve anonymity (Sparkes, 2002).

Legitimising Ethnographic Text

Hymes (1996) suggests that ethnographers’ use of language for description enables them to be judged in terms of competence for the richness or readability of their texts. However, he argues, the use of language for analysis is more often controversial, for instance over the prioritisation of data, the scope of data utilised or relevance of data to an analytical concept or framework. Hymes (ibid) also contends that narratives are a source of knowledge in their own right and not secondary knowledge or reducible to other forms of knowledge. Bochner & Ellis argue that the goal of ethnographic writing is “to feel ethnographic ‘truth’ and thus to become fully immersed – morally, aesthetically, emotionally and intellectually” (1996, p5). Similar notions of representing the immersed experience are expressed by Richardson:

“Good ethnography invites the reader to experience a culture or an event...the reader feels the experience.” (1997, p182)

This also links with the debates about fiction in the preceding section, and I suspect immersed experiences are best represented by adopting some fictional literary conventions.

Lassiter however highlights a particular “gap between academically positioned and community positioned narratives” (2005, p4) and suggests that this can be narrowed by ‘collaborative ethnography’. This reflects a shift away from ethnographer-generated monologues, to ‘involved dialogues’ between the researcher and the informants. Sometimes this may entail the ethnographer collaborating and engaging with the ‘consultants’ (as opposed to ‘informants’)

over decisions, meanings and interpretations at every step of the research process, such that they are overtly part of creating the ethnographic text. Consequently authority and control of the text can be moved away from the ethnographer, reflecting a different perspective on how to evaluate and interpret text in terms of validity and reliability.

Responses to the ‘crisis of representation’

Critical questions relating to the representation of ethnographic data have been addressed by variety of innovative approaches, termed ‘creative analytic practice ethnography’ (Richardson, 2000). These include new genres of ethnographic writing, where the writing process and writing product are deeply intertwined, to include poetry, fiction stories and drama.

Poetry adopts literary devices that make it subject to multiple and open meanings, to have greater chance of engaging readers in reflexive analysis and to elicit sensory responses, for instance through rhyme, speed or alliteration (Richardson, 1997). Richardson therefore suggests that poems can come closer to presenting ‘lived experience’ than narratives, since they are consciously constructed to evoke emotions, feelings and moods in order to re-create (rather than attempting to represent) experiences. Sparkes (2002) suggests that ethnographic fictions (based upon being in the field and collecting systematic data) can address perceived limitations on communication and understanding imposed by traditional ethnographic writing. Fictions tend to be less author centred (with less authorial presence in the text), allow the reader to make meanings, evoke emotions and engage the reader at an emotional level. He also argues that the emotional texture of life is better captured by fiction, which also is a powerful way of conveying complexity and ambiguity without rendering closure.

However, Bagley (2008) queries the ability of the written word to bring the sensual and evocative richness of everyday sights, sounds, touch and smell to convey meaning. Rather he advocates ‘performance art’ as a way to (re)present ethnographic data, which explores bodily knowing, allows multiple meanings, engages the viewer and overtly acknowledges lived diversity and complexity. In

contrast, Ingold (2010) questions the distinction between walking in a real landscape and walking in the imagination, for example whilst reading a text. He contends that the latter should be regarded as a visual medium, with scenes and stories furnishing the mind with images that provide sense and direction to currents of experience, suggesting that:

“To walk is to journey in the mind as much as on the land: it is a deeply meditative practice. And to read is to journey on the page as much as in the mind...there is constant traffic between these terrains...through the gateway of the senses.” (ibid, p18)

Both experiences, he argues, generate ‘figments’ which “give shape to the inner generative impulse that is life itself” (ibid, p17).

In the opening chapters I use the ethnographic present to capture events ‘frozen in time’ (Clifford, 1990) and adopt literary conventions around character development, describing physical and personality traits, together with multi-sensory accounts of the setting. In Chapter 3 I present a chronological account of events to simplify readability, facilitate routine assimilation and to assist in mental image generation for the reader. However, rather than ‘fictions’, I present the accounts as my representation of reality.

Bounded and Communal Ethnographies

Since my own thesis is an ethnography focused on a bounded and communal educational setting, I have decided to review a range of ethnographies which have a similar focus, specifically noting any conceptual or methodological implications for my study.

As society became more complex in the twentieth century, there was a shift away from ethnographies studying distant cultures to those focused on institutions or cultural processes, of which schools became one of the most frequently researched sites (Heath & Street, 2008). Hargreaves (1967) studied a selective urban grammar school as a bounded social system, embedded within a wider society. His four year study, whilst working as part-time teacher, focused upon informal social relationships amongst pupils based around two main sub-cultures. Lacey (1970) examined social relations, in a boys’ secondary modern school

over the course of a school year, and also identified the development of sub-cultures, which were influenced in part by peer group pressure and the streaming system. Both these studies entailed a prolonged immersion in the setting whilst undertaking some teaching, and focused pre-dominantly upon relationships amongst students. Burgess (1983) in his study of Bishop McGregor School focused upon relationships between teachers and pupils within an individual department, in addition to examining social processes across the school via three specific events, to which different staff reacted in different ways. This focused study employed detailed rich descriptions and multi-dimensional analysis using case studies. Yeo (2010), whilst studying international students within an Australian boarding school (where he was an ex-pupil), revealed a complex set of power relationships, intertwined with racial and ethical issues. He also highlighted the evolving nature of the insider-outsider relationship with his informants within the bounded community.

Hymes argued that many school studies lacked a comparative perspective, believing:

“an interdependence between general and particular inquiry is essential to ethnography as a mode of inquiry.” (1996, p15)

He related this to ‘ethnology’ and a comparative generalisation element which, he argued, is rooted in anthropological studies of American kinship. This highlights a broad tension within ethnography over the viability of drawing generalisations (particularly when small single cases are studied) whilst also preserving the particularity of the case. In some instances, general theoretical accounts can emerge through the detailed study of particular events, whilst other cases may be selected for the specific purpose of linking in with generalisations within a larger population. Others aim at producing thick descriptions, to be judged by the reader and used to interpret new situations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Such debates around generalisability link with my decision to undertake a case study, and these are explored further in the next chapter.

Nespor (1997) challenged traditional bounded school ethnographies by suggesting that schools are not simple ‘institutional shells’, filled by teachers and students. From studying Thurber Elementary School in Virginia for two years he

suggested that schools were complex institutions, inextricably linked to their locality via numerous factors including politics, economics, corporate relations, neighbourhood history and popular culture. He layered narratives throughout his account, addressing different aspects of the school, whilst acknowledging that “ethnographies examine sectioned-out parts of ongoing processes” (ibid, p196). As such the beginning and ending of ethnographies refer only to the researchers’ temporal engagement with continuing processes.

Macdonald (2002) conducted an ethnographic study of a museum, based around a temporary gallery exhibition within the Science Museum in London. She overtly acknowledged the “particularity of a spatio-temporal location” (ibid, p246) but was conscious that the study was not in fact bounded by the physical boundaries of the building. She also grappled with participating and observing “messy actuality” (ibid, p6) whilst guarding against assumptions of homogeneity within different groups such as the ‘public’ and the ‘staff’. Also, in studying an ‘unexotic location’ she was conscious of the need to de-familiarise the familiar.

Many of these bounded ethnographies focus upon social relationships and analyse specific events to examine multi-dimensional perspectives. They have evolved from long term engagements to include focused and short-term immersions, like my study at Oaklands. Questions around the actuality of a bounded location are also contested and I explicitly explore these issues in the relation to my conceptual discussion of community in Chapter 6 and re-visit them again within my analysis in Chapter 8.

Conclusions and Implications

Ethnography is a broad and evolving term and, as Ellen suggests, “is something you may do, study, use, read or write” (1984, p8). In setting out to undertake an ethnography I felt a professional obligation to the respective institutions to describe, represent and interpret events as accurately as possible. In so doing, I make the assumption that I am able to describe some phenomena as they are (and not just as I perceive them) and that I am able to capture other people’s perceptions of these phenomena, given that presuppositions about the world are

an everyday part of living (Hammersley, 1992). Nonetheless I certainly feel the need to reflect upon and report what appears to be, or potentially could be, problematic. I also accept that my research is produced through the selective observation and theoretical interpretation of what I see and experience. However to suggest that my data or text is ‘constructed’ need not necessarily imply that it cannot represent social reality, accepting of course there is a single reality to represent.

Through my narratives and rich descriptions I seek to portray some of the complex processes evolving within the setting. I am not however creating a chronology¹²; I seek to interpret and understand what is happening. By examining processes of community formation I hope to provide explanations about relationships or factors that may be in play and indeed some of these may actually be generalisable beyond my bounded case. Richardson (2000) suggests that an ethnographic text should be evaluated in terms of whether it has an embodied sense of lived experience and whether it seems to be a credible account of the ‘real’. To this end I am seeking to engage the reader, to help them connect with the individuals, to develop feelings of empathy and to promote understanding through identification with personal experience and emotion. As a multi-sensory participant (Pink, 2009) I am joining with participants in embodied activities such as wading in rivers, playing table tennis, eating meals and sensing frustration and adversity. My challenge therefore is to represent the multi-sensory experience through the medium of text, drawing upon the work of Ingold (2010) who suggests that embodied experiences can be ‘lived’ through reading.

In this chapter I have sought to contextualise my study within the field of ethnography, to explain the approach I take in the opening chapters and to signpost dilemmas that I will explore later in the thesis. The specific methodological issues, approaches and decisions I took in relation to my study of the bounded setting of Oaklands are addressed in the next chapter.

¹² Although I adopt a chronological approach in Chapter 3 for the reasons explained earlier in this Chapter.

Chapter 5

Methodology

Introduction

I am framing my thesis as an Ethnographic Case Study. As such this chapter starts with a short discussion around my interpretation of the term case study in relation to this research. I also attempt to make explicit my role as researcher; addressing some of the issues I grappled with, the doubts I felt and the decisions I took. I discuss my perceptions of the implications of these in relation to the research, including specific limitations with my approaches to data collection. In highlighting such issues I aim to encourage a critical reading of the analysis in the following chapters.

Case Study

My thesis is focused upon a single institution, Oaklands Field Study Centre, and upon one particular week (9-13 March, 2009) when a group from St. Catherine's High School visited. This is a very specific location and timeframe, with a particular group of students, creating in effect a non-replicable set of circumstances. My premise is that all fieldtrips are unique, dependent upon their location, time and participants. My intention was to undertake a detailed investigation of the particular and unique circumstances of this individual fieldtrip. As such, this fits with the interpretation of Stake who defines a case study as:

“the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.” (1995, xi)

Moreover, as case study utilizes whatever methods are deemed most appropriate, I regard it not as a methodological choice per se, but as a general objective to develop as full an understanding as possible of the particular circumstances (Punch, 1999). Such understandings are based upon insights into specific instances, events or situations that took place during the week (Walker, 1974). Moreover, I have selected a case study as it supports my desire to portray the

holistic characteristics of the real-life situation (Yin 2003), in terms of best representing the complex and multiple experiences of the participants on a residential fieldtrip.

Flood (1991) cites the importance of boundaries in defining a case study, with everything inside the boundary being crucial to the investigation. I suggest that my study could be viewed as bounded, both spatially and temporarily, in that it is restricted to one particular fieldtrip. However I am aware that it is problematic to assume that such boundaries are impermeable. Spatially, my study is not confined entirely to the centre (and grounds), but to other locations visited under the auspices of the fieldtrip. In relation to time, the focus was the single week, although I did conduct a few interviews three weeks after the trip with some participants in order to examine the permanence of changes resulting from the experience. Clearly the fieldtrip did not happen in a vacuum, it was part of an academic year which had started the previous September. Consequently my observations drew upon previous experiences in school and I was effectively gaining insights into already established and evolving relationships between and amongst the students and teachers. Equally the Geographical content was part of a planned curricular progression leading to the AS examinations in June 2009. Therefore, whilst I am constructing a case around a central week, this is not neatly bounded by the obvious spatial and temporal limits of the fieldtrip itself. Furthermore, in the tradition of case study, my data collection in the actual field study centre was very short, so it could perhaps be argued that I am in fact undertaking 'condensed fieldwork'. This was a term used by Walker (1974) to mean the use of case study methods to collect and present data with speed, in contrast to case study research which usually involves, or requires, long time spans. I argue that in presenting a bounded study of the detailed and specific circumstances on one particular fieldtrip, I can justifiably present my thesis as a case study.

This is not a convenient, nor an easy choice. Case studies have been criticised for several reasons, including difficulties in making generalisations from the case, influencing policy or gaining academic credence (Walker, 1974). Nonetheless for me, comprehension by the reader (Stake, 2000) is a more important consideration

and is one of my desired outcomes from this research. In studying a single week at the centre I am not attempting to formulate generalisations about residential fieldwork, field study centres, nor even Oaklands Field Study Centre itself. I do, however, seek to understand some of the perceptions and attitudes felt by participants upon this particular visit. I am mindful of the interpretation of Hoaglin et al (1982) who argue that it is difficult to undertake a case study successfully, although many people feel they can prepare one. It is therefore with a sense of trepidation that I approached the task.

Research Design

My research involved living with, participating in and observing a group of thirty-six students, three teachers and four field centre staff at Oaklands Field Study Centre. I approached the research initially with a single, broad question; what are the experiences of being on a residential fieldtrip? As previously indicated, I was more interested in the particularities of an individual trip, rather than making generalisations about residential fieldtrips. Consequently my research agenda emerged throughout the fieldtrip as the week unfolded, during which time I formulated, rejected, adopted and refined a series of research questions in response to particular and specific events and interpretations. These included:

- How do individual students develop socially during the week?
- How does group cohesion alter during the week?
- How and why do relationships between staff and students evolve?
- Are community sentiments felt by participants on the trip?
- If so, what factors contribute to community sentiments?
- How is space used at the centre and how does this contribute to feelings of community?

From these questions three central themes emerged based around some of the established requisite elements within a community (Chapter 7 contains a detailed review of literature around the concept of community). These include issues around occupying a common territorial area and the extent to which Oaklands could be regarded as a bounded setting. Secondly I consider the complex and multiple relationships between the individuals within that setting, to include

changing perceptions of teacher identity. Thirdly I examine perceptions around common experiences and the development of camaraderie, including notions of shared adversity. Cutting across these three themes, several underlying issues emerged such as teacher control in shaping and influencing the conditions, different and competing agendas over fieldwork and opportunities to challenge norms from school.

I found myself taking on the roles of both participant and observer at various times throughout the week. For example, mealtimes were occasions for full participation whilst during classroom sessions I was more of an observer of the participation of others. In such situations, the fact I was writing notes coincided with the activity the students were engaged with. During the Geography fieldwork excursions I sometimes helped out but on other occasions I stood back to observe, making notes on a clipboard, again an activity superficially in common with some of the students. In the early days of anthropology, Malinowski argued that practical action and participation was crucial to developing understanding:

“Meaning does not come...from the contemplation of things, or the analysis of occurrences, but in practical and active acquaintance with relevant situations.” (1923, p325)

I felt that it was difficult to achieve this consistently, although some of my most productive time (in terms of acquiring ‘natural’ data, which I define here as spontaneous student behaviour without the direction or direct influence of the teachers) was through participation around the centre during leisure time. I took the opportunity to mingle, socialise, play pool, frisbee, rounders and table tennis, hang out and watch TV or sit around the fire with a coffee. However, unlike Malinowski, I have incorporated relativity and reflexivity into my research. He failed to acknowledge these issues in his texts, for which he has been heavily critiqued (Roberts et al, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Throughout my interactions and involvement, I was clearly not a ‘member’ of any specific group, other than the evolving community of all individuals at the centre. Ellen (1984) suggests that the ethnographer can take advantage of not trying to become a member, by systematically exploiting the fact that they are

not a member. I found that accepting this helped in relation to my rather unique status. Obviously I was not a member of the school, but importantly I was in situ when the school group arrived at Oaklands. I could therefore be perceived as part of the setting from the very outset. From the viewpoint of Oaklands staff, as a visitor accompanying and observing one particular group, I was a temporary visitor like the rest of the members of the St. Catherine's party. Although I was not a member of either of these macro groupings (centre or school), each group perceived the other as 'outsiders' so from their perspectives I was an additional 'outsider'. This perhaps served to lessen the perceived uniqueness of my position and facilitated my quiet assimilation into the whole. Without having obvious allegiances or membership, this assisted me in obtaining frank insights held by individuals about members of the other group. This was most evident in the views expressed to me about the relationship between the teachers and centre tutors (See Chapter 9). Uncomfortably however, I was a guest of both and consequently felt a degree of gratitude (and perhaps obligation) not to represent unfavourably those upon whom I was reliant for my very presence. Equally I encountered the issue of juggling closeness and distance between myself and the individuals I was observing, a dilemma Roberts et al encapsulated in their interpretation of being "liberated to be forever in-between" (2001, p30). For me it felt more like contortion than liberation. I was particularly sensitive to avoid being perceived as close to the teachers, since I felt this could impinge upon how the students reacted towards me. I had prior knowledge of all the teachers, through professional engagement, and as a former teacher myself I shared a common background. Mindful of this, I was constantly and actively managing my relations with the three main groups of individuals; teachers, students and centre staff, striving to develop rapport, without over-identifying with one particular group. Hammersley & Atkinson refer to this as attempting to attain "the position of an acceptable marginal member, in relation to several audiences" (2007, p68). However, given my external relations, my personal background and my feelings of indebtedness at being allowed to join the group I was perhaps less 'marginal' with the teachers. On the other hand, I attempted to exploit this to my own ends (again at some cost of personal guilt) by empathising in an attempt to further open up their feelings and thoughts.

These issues also relate to what Todorov (1988) suggests is a fundamental contradiction in ethnography. Namely that claims to validity require a degree of 'distance' from the ideas of the people under scrutiny in order to realise what is taken for granted, yet essential familiarity with the culture is derived from proximity. In studying a field study centre, I was on territory where I had a degree of familiarity. I had previously participated in and led residential fieldtrips at various field study centres, including one to Oaklands. This was over ten years ago, when the centre was managed and run by a different regime. All of the staff had changed, with the exception of Sue the head housekeeper, although neither of us remembered the other. Nonetheless Heath & Street (2008) suggest it is hard to maintain a value-neutral stance when one is familiar with the setting and this could potentially lead me to look for, or interpret, incidents based upon my pre-conceived expectations based upon prior experience. Such background 'baggage' would appear to impinge upon my ability to make the setting 'anthropologically strange' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), a stance that they argue facilitates the learning of new cultures and objectivity.

I have sought to make reflexivity a feature within my research study, in relation to my interactions with informants, as well as through the processes of data collection and text construction. This entails analysing my own actions on the same terms as participants, making the reader aware of decisions taken, the motives underlying them and the potential consequences of such decisions (Hammersley, 1984). I interspersed my fieldnotes with reflexive commentary throughout, including detailed notes on how I felt I was received and how I perceived this may have affected the data I was collecting. I also started a reflective journal upon embarking with the research in which I recorded my thoughts, concerns, anxieties and doubts. During the fieldtrip itself I wrote daily reflections upon my progress in this journal, together with my feelings. Examples of these are included in the next section, which considers the process of data collection.

Data Collection

Context

The selection of my case was achieved by choosing a school group, as opposed to approaching a specific field study centre. I felt that access to a school group was potentially more problematic than gaining access to a field study centre. From my professional involvement with schools, I enquired about those running residential trips, who would readily accept me along in order to undertake ethnographic research. I actually received over ten offers, with venues around the world (including Morocco and USA). I selected the trip to Oaklands as it was fairly local so that I could make provisional visits to develop an understanding of the centre and its locality, prior to the trip itself. I also favoured a UK centre as I felt that adding an additional cultural dimension, although fascinating, could potentially confuse the relationships and processes I was studying. It would certainly have afforded me an 'anthropologically strange' setting to study, but I felt that given my inexperience in undertaking ethnographic research I was already contending with considerable new experiences. Also as the St. Catherine's students were studying A levels, I felt they may potentially be more mature and sophisticated in expressing insights about their thoughts and feelings. The dates of the visit were fixed prior to my interest, so I had to clear my diary for the week in question. I was initially concerned that one week of study would yield insufficient data upon which to base a thesis and did make follow up visits to the school three weeks after the trip to conduct further interviews. I was more reassured, after conversations with my supervisor and further personal reading, that a 'compressed time mode' (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004) involving a brief but intense period of data collection would be viable.

My research was conducted in an overt manner in that all participants on the trip were aware of my attendance in advance and that my role was to conduct research on Geography fieldwork. The teachers and centre staff knew that I was undertaking an ethnography and that I would be making observations of all aspects of the experience. In spite of this, I was unsure whether they really understood what I was looking at (although I was unsure myself about this at the outset), or how the data may appear in a completed ethnographic account. The

students (and their parents) were aware that my interest was in residential fieldtrips and that I would be observing and participating in all aspects of the visit. I strongly suspected they had even less awareness of ethnography, either as a method or a genre.

Pilot Study

I undertook two pilot study visits, with the aims of refining my data collection techniques and familiarising myself with the setting. The first was to a different residential field study centre where I spent a day observing and participating in a Geography fieldtrip with nineteen year 10 pupils from a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. The students undertook a river survey in the morning and analysed data using computers in the afternoon. I became accustomed to eavesdropping into casual conversations and discovered that informal opportunistic conversations were very productive for gaining data. I was also personally more relaxed with this approach (as opposed to the semi-formal interviews that I also piloted) and became experienced in shifting the focus of the conversations, to cover strategic topics.

I also started to develop my style of note taking, attempting to include a running account of events, interspersed with notable verbatim quotes or phrases. To supplement this I sought to include contextual descriptions plus my own personal reflections and insights on events. I also started a separate reflective journal in which I recorded personal feelings about my progress and the overall experience. The latter suggests that I faced initial difficulties:

“I feel that I am trying to do too much. It is an interesting but confusing & bewildering experience.

My tendency is to focus too much on teachers/staff and what is being said by them.

When observing the pupils I struggle with what to watch. Do I go for oversight of the whole group, or watching a few specific individuals?”¹³
(Reflective Journal, 12 January 2009)

¹³ I use the same font for quotes from my reflective journal, since these represent my voice.

I also encountered an over-enthusiastic teacher who seemed eager to monopolize me with her own agenda. She told me in great detail about her own experiences and thoughts and regularly provided commentary upon proceedings for my benefit. Whilst perhaps trying to be helpful, I found her oppressive and distracting. Nonetheless the experience taught me to consider the motives of informants, about how I may be perceived and about the necessity to manage field relations carefully.

My second pilot study was to Oaklands and this afforded me insights into the welcome routine provided to groups on their first morning and gave me an opportunity to wander around the site alone, familiarising myself with the space. Although invaluable in these respects, the experience made me more nervous about the impending 'real' field trip:

"Having been at Oaklands itself the reality of the actual visit is getting nearer. I am starting to feel more anxious & worried. What am I actually focusing on? Will I get enough data? Am I doing it right? What do I need to do to prepare?" (Reflective Journal, 29 January 2009)

Access, Early Field Relations and Reflections

I arrived at Oaklands at 9.30 am on the Monday morning of the trip, for a brief reacquaintance with the facilities and staff prior to the arrival of the school party. When the coach arrived I mingled around the entrance hall, initially talking to Georgina. I was introduced to the students by Emma, during the induction talk held in the lounge shortly after their arrival. It was a rather brief and low-key introduction, amidst a wealth of information on rules and routines. She merely explained that my name was Nick, I was a university researcher studying this fieldtrip and that I would be around all week. The students were aware that I would be about, but this was their first opportunity to meet me. Neither Emma nor Dan had consulted me over my introduction, but the fact she used my Christian name and kept it very short and simple suited me. I dressed casually, so as to fit unremarkably into the context where teachers and students were also casually dressed.

I already knew the teachers and centre staff, from previous dealings and my pilot visit respectively, so my early work on field relations concentrated upon the students. My approach was to maintain a quiet and unobtrusive presence, but to progressively build trust and rapport with groups and individuals by roaming. I sought to project myself as a normal, regular person, as opposed to a potentially remote, aloof or eccentric academic, in an attempt to dispel potential misconceptions around my identity as a university researcher. My reflective journal documents initial anxiety over building relations:

“Monday lunchtime. I feel quite awkward. Pupils rush in to get their food & sit down. By the time I arrive few seats are left. I sit on the same table as Georgina, but she is at the other end. People are talking around me, but not including me. I don’t want to butt in and seem forward. I feel very much an outsider.”
(Reflective Journal, 9 March, 2009)

By Monday evening, my entry reveals some progress:

“Mon afternoon –assisting groups with fieldwork, easier to strike up conversations. Some students confide about lack of enjoyment. Aware I lack any authority to make decisions about ending work & going back. This distinguishes me from other adults.
Lack of knowledge of individual students is a bit of a hindrance.”
(Reflective Journal, 9 March, 2009)

I was conscious of the need to establish amicable and productive field relations in order to improve the quality and quantity of my data (Benyon, 1984).

However I was also under additional pressure to achieve this quickly as I only had a short and fixed time frame for data collection. In relation to the teachers and centre staff I was keen to distance myself, where possible, from my potential other identities (such as ex-teacher, PGCE tutor) and always tried to keep conversation on events of the week, rather than bringing in topics around experiences related to these other roles.

Oral Data

I obtained oral data from a variety of sources. These included informal conversations I had with informants, often alongside observation. Throughout the week, the nature of my conversations altered, particularly with the students. As

discussed, at the outset I was concerned with acceptance and integration, keen to exude quiet but genial sociability, in order to build trust. As the week progressed I felt that my rapport developed, as I became a more accepted member and participant in events. By Thursday and Friday (at which point my lines of enquiry had started to crystallise) I attempted to use some conversations to gather specific data, by thinking on my feet in response to comments and steering chatter into my own research agenda. Inevitably though, I cannot assume that any views expressed in conversation with me were necessarily accurate or genuine; it may be that narratives were spun for my consumption.

Another rich and plentiful source of oral data was overheard speech. Sometimes I suspect I was eavesdropping, with the participants being oblivious to this, yet on other occasions by virtue of my presence they may have modified their conversations, either deliberately or subconsciously. Sometimes things were said purposefully for public consumption, perhaps with a specific underlying intention or purpose. It was not possible for me to definitively differentiate between such circumstances or motives, so again I am seemingly required to accept the data at face value. However, using rich description I was able to contextualise speech and as I came to know individuals I was able to build and develop mental images of their characters. Also through triangulation I can perhaps claim some degree of data reliability. On the other hand I did note that a few people expressed views which were inconsistent, but I suggest that this was perhaps in response to circumstance rather than a conscious or deliberate attempt to mislead.

I obtained written consent and conducted semi-formal individual interviews with all the adults (the three teachers, two centre tutors, the chef and head housekeeper). These were scheduled encounters in private rooms, the interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. I had a generic list of issues at the outset, but the content and agenda were flexible to enable me to pick up on particular responses and to refer to previous incidents relating to the informant concerned, if applicable. I also interviewed seventeen of the thirty-six students, moving between rooms whilst the students were writing up their projects. These interviews all took place on Thursday 12 March. There were eight students

whom I specifically pre-selected to interview, based upon my observation of events earlier in the week. The remaining interviews were randomly selected, based upon the availability and location of students, and these continued until I ran out of time at the end of that day. These interviews took place in the room where the students had chosen to work. I always suggested moving to a private corner, in perhaps what was only a token gesture towards confidentiality. Despite this, on different occasions, a friend walked over and joined in the conversation and someone was called over to explain their perspective on an issue. I secured written consent for each of these interviews, which were conducted in a similar flexible fashion around a different pre-determined list. I chose to tape the interviews so that I was free from writing in the interviews, in order to concentrate on maximising the opportunity in terms of responding reflexively to particular answers and in thinking of specific questions. Follow up interviews were held with the three teachers and four students at St. Catherine's, three weeks after the fieldtrip. These were also taped and transcribed, with separate consent forms completed.

Once again I cannot be assured of the reliability of my data since, as Denscombe (1984) notes, interviews themselves are distinctive social episodes. Interview data is not direct evidence of events, nor unmediated access to the personal feelings or experiences of an individual (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997). They suggest that someone may use the opportunity to offer justifications, or excuses, for themselves and others, or for proffering explanations and motives. Any responses cannot be taken as facts; they are jointly produced narratives in which the responses are perhaps largely dependent upon the questions themselves. As such, my choice of question, or even the wording I used may actually represent my interests or bias which could then be amplified. By taping the interviews my informants were aware that what they were saying was effectively 'on the record', with the result that they may have withheld, or possibly projected, certain views accordingly. Walker (1974) suggests respondents will usually either tell the interviewer what they perceive they want to hear, or will take issue with what they perceive the interviewer's perspective to be. Either way, he argues, the perspective of the interviewer enters the interview.

By transcribing interviews and analysing transcripts, I am only considering one dimension of the exchange, since non verbal signals and context are lost such that “the interactive situation is pressed flat, like washing from a mangle” (Hull, 1984, p8). Finally, as with all my oral data, I am conscious that responses are dependent upon the emotions of the informant at that particular time whilst, irrespective of their intentions or personal motives, they are also subject to possible partial recall (Denscombe, 1984). Nonetheless, I do try to provide the context for direct quotes, both in terms of how I shaped the encounter and my own response to the comments.

Observations

Observation was a significant source of data for my thesis and I sought to gather data from a wide range of locations. I effectively had open access to the majority of the centre, but chose to exclude myself from the dormitories of others, out of respect for personal space and privacy. There were other areas, most notably specific spaces allocated to Oaklands staff, where I only entered with invitation. These included the kitchen, the centre staff room (the ‘snug’) and the Lead Tutor’s office.

As previously noted, I strived to immerse myself in the experience where possible, taking the role of a multi-sensory participant (Pink, 2009) by engaging and assisting with fieldwork and participating in recreational activities. Joining in whilst also acutely watching, listening and trying to commit things to memory was a demanding and draining task. It necessitated me having to remember events and incidents, grabbing opportunities to write these up subsequently. I was concerned that I was forgetting, or omitting, seemingly insignificant but potentially key facts. Also I was worried that when writing up, I was potentially missing out on some vital experience. On the other hand, I felt more confident with my clipboard or notebooks in front of me, an observer of the participation of others. This was convenient and unobtrusive in certain contexts (notably the classroom or whilst undertaking fieldwork) but I felt it would have potentially altered behaviours or attitudes towards me if I took this approach constantly. Equally however, I found non-participant observation personally less fulfilling and enjoyable.

In response to my uncertainty of what to look for, I initially attempted to follow the advice of Delamont (1992) by undertaking short periods of general scanning, characterised by unfocused watching and broad sweeps. I interspersed these with periods of close attention focused upon a particular individual, group or phenomena. As my experience and confidence increased, I became more comfortable in accepting the views of Wolcott (2001) over the impossibility of looking at everything, necessitating one to look selectively, but with choices made reflexively. Alongside my observation fieldnotes, I made initial analytic memos based upon my own insights, interpretations and inferences.

Documentation

I collected and analysed a range of written documentation about the fieldtrip. These included official Oakland's publications written by the centre staff (such as the Centre Handbook and the public web site) and internal publications for use by centre staff (including the Good Customer Care Guide) written by the Centre in conjunction with the Local Authority Advisor for Outdoor Education. There were a range of public documents inside the building which were displayed, for example on notice boards in communal areas (e.g. the entrance hall, dining room) in addition to semi-public notices in areas of restricted access (e.g. the school teachers' staff room, centre staff room, kitchen, Lead Teacher's office). I was also given access to documentation pertaining to the particular visit, which was designed for specific audiences (e.g. student workbooks issued by the tutors to the visiting students - see Appendix A; planning meeting notes shared between the teachers and tutors - see Appendix B). I was careful to note the context of documents, using the typology above, mindful that they were socially produced for the intended audience (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Validity and Reliability

Issues around validity and reliability of data were an area of concern to me throughout my research. I was conscious of the enormity of capturing the viewpoints and perspectives of a range of different participants, empathizing with them, their views and experiences (Delamont, 1992). From my lurching early observations in the field, to the coding of the seemingly disparate data I

collected, such doubts ebbed and flowed throughout. Moreover there was the issue that my own presence influenced the data I was trying to capture. Clearly it would be problematic (even if it were possible) to attempt to eradicate any such effects, but equally I was unable to ignore them. I have therefore attempted to identify them for the reader and to understand them through my reflexive analysis. I have also been unsettled by the seemingly fundamental question of how do I know that informants are not just telling me what they think I want to hear? At times it felt like the very essence of my research could be instantly undermined by this. However, by integrating context and through the rich description of episodes, I hope to provide interpretations and explanations, linked to triangulated data or changing circumstances. Through rich description I also aim to address the issue raised by Heath and Street who state:

“Readers often speak of the validity of the work of ethnographers in terms of whether situations and scenes come alive or not.” (2008, p45)

Walker also offers a helpful perspective, arguing:

“Reliability is concerned with the relation between data and interpretation not with the adequacy of data as descriptive of reality.” (1974, p88)

Where applicable, I have sought to present material which is open to multiple interpretations, thereby offering the reader the opportunity to assume some responsibility for judging reliability. I also explicitly acknowledge my role in constructing the text (see Analysis and Text construction Section later in this Chapter).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to undertaking the research I conformed to the ethical procedures of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia. This involved gaining permission from the School’s Ethics Committee for my research, satisfying them about my procedures around consent, anonymity, confidentiality and avoidance of harm. I also sought and obtained permission to undertake the research from the Governing Body and Headteacher of the school, the Local Authority and the Lead Tutor of Oaklands Field Study Centre (see Appendix C for a copy of the Consent Form). The Head of Geography and trip leader had originally invited me to attend, and had checked with his colleagues

that they were happy to have me along. Parents of the students were advised of my attendance as a researcher during the pre-visit parents meeting (compulsory for all residential school trips), whilst a paragraph about this was also included in the consent letter parents had to sign to allow the participation of their child (see Appendix D). My contact details were also included, in the event of any questions or concerns but I did not receive any. For my taped informal interviews I created a participant consent form in which I explained specific issues surrounding this form of data collection, including the option to refuse to answer questions or to withdraw from the interview at any point (see Appendix E for a copy of this form).

Whilst my presence as a researcher was overt, my research agenda was not. Having secured access to the fieldtrip, it was largely impossible for any individual within the setting to decline involvement in my research. I could justifiably claim that I did not necessarily know myself, particularly at the outset, what was involved or where my research was going. I was directly asked on a couple of occasions what I was researching, to which I replied that I was: “focusing upon the experiences of being on a residential fieldtrip.” Whilst factually correct, this proved sufficiently vague, uninspiring, or perhaps evasive to encourage little follow up questioning. Although not wishing to appear uncooperative, I was slightly concerned that if I was explicit about what I was investigating, it may impact upon the behaviour of informants. For instance, if someone knew I was focusing upon social relationships, they may have altered their behaviour in order to present themselves in a different way. I also suspected that any given individual did not necessarily realise the level of scrutiny that they could potentially be subjected to and felt similar misgivings over my adoption of eavesdropping as a covert data collection method. I used the words ‘ethnography’ and ‘observation’ when talking about my research with informants, but perceived a lack of knowledge, understanding or interest in what such research actually meant in practice. Despite following the research ethics procedures required of me by the University, I felt that these potentially offered minimal protection to my informants and I was required to make ethical decisions in the field, without compromising the integrity of my research.

Consequently I was fairly certain that the students, and suspected that the adults, did not really appreciate how they may end up being analysed and represented. Miles & Huberman highlight an element within this critical dilemma, whereby the ethnographer: “makes public the private and leaves the locals to take the consequences” (1984, p265). This resonated with me, especially over relationships between the teachers and the centre staff, where frank, personal and possibly private views were expressed to me. I grappled with the issue of whether to use fictional vignettes, by altering the details of non-essential characteristics of individuals (such as their gender and physical stature) in order to enhance and preserve their anonymity. I decided against this, as in the case of many students their identity is preserved by my changing their names. For the adults (both teachers and centre staff) they are identifiable by virtue of their position which is a characteristic instrumental to their insights, opinions and perspectives, a fact that rendered fictionalising some of their other characteristics rather futile. Nonetheless, the fictionalised names of the centre, school and individuals effectively makes their identification impossible by those not on the particular trip. It is conceivable that a few individual students may be identifiable by other trip members by virtue of their behaviour or views. However, the student voices which feature most prominently within the thesis (and therefore the individuals most likely to be identifiable) were those whose behaviour had aroused my interest during the week and were subsequently approached for a taped interview. All those I approached agreed to an interview and signed a participant consent form for that element, in full knowledge of the intended use of their comments and views.

I felt uncertainty over how much personal information about myself I should disclose, particularly to the students. I suspected there would be less curiosity about myself as they were post-16 students, as opposed to more curious younger secondary school pupils. If I was perceived as an ally of the teachers, I felt that their behaviour around me may change. Equally I felt an obligation of reciprocity, especially when extracting information from informants in what appeared to be just casual conversation.

I agonised over the lack of opportunity for informants to decline, vagueness about my intentions, my use of what may be considered covert data collection methods and the potential identification of certain individuals by other members. These general difficulties, which are often associated with ethnographic research, required me to adopt “ethical situationism” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p219). This suggests that ethical legitimacy is a matter of context and the judgement of the researcher, depending upon an assessment of relative benefits and costs. It necessitates avoiding serious harm to participants, but prioritises the need for the legitimacy of research, even if offence to someone cannot necessarily be avoided. I have actively sought to avoid harm and have consistently adopted strict procedures in relation to anonymity (in changing the names of all individuals, institutions and places) and confidentiality (by my careful storage of all documentation and through data restriction to myself and my supervisor only).

A final ethical consideration I need to address relates to possible power relations between myself and my informants. As a PGCE Geography Tutor I am responsible for arranging and monitoring student teaching placements within a partnership of 70-80 secondary schools. Invariably I find that more schools wish to host my students (typically 40-45) than there are students (around 20), whilst St. Catherine’s is a school that always offers a Geography placement. Aware of the demand for my students, it could be that the St. Catherine’s teachers used the opportunity to try and impress me, in either a conscious or sub-conscious attempt to secure future student placements. This could manifest itself in overly-positive interpretations, but on the other hand they may feel that by agreeing to my participation on the trip they may be automatically entitled to preferential placement allocation. The centre tutors were also aware of my potential influence (through my networking with partnership schools and from views or experiences I express to my students who in turn head off into schools) in that positive reviews from myself could potentially yield future business for them. To this end, they may also have been attempting to portray or create positive impressions of residential fieldwork at Oaklands. There were no such agendas in my relationship with the students, although my freedom within the setting arguably gave me higher status than them. It was apparent that I was an adult

member without any power over the schedule, content or fieldtrip arrangements. I was never consulted by centre staff or teachers for my opinion on what or how things should be done and the students picked up on this. As such I was never asked for permission by the students to be allowed to do things, as it was obvious I did not have the authority to grant requests or make decisions that affected them. On the other hand however, I was also clearly exempt from the routines or protocols required of the teachers and centre staff in that I was free to wander about as I wished, with the option and power to leave the site whenever and as often as I liked. This gave me a unique freedom, but without operational power over anyone.

If I were perceived in any of these ways by the respective groups this could potentially alter their behaviour in my presence. Although I am not seeking to make generalisations about other residential fieldtrips, these are important contextual factors for this particular study.

Analysis and Text Construction

In setting out to write an ethnography I am striving to:

“recreate social worlds for readers by writing descriptions of scenes and settings, introducing and assembling characters and narrating social actions.” (Atkinson & Delamont, 1990, p77)

The transformation of my data into the final text was a lengthy and detailed process (See Appendices F-H for examples of my fieldnotes). I initially analysed and coded all my data into three main categories, based around the following emerging themes which arose through the data:

Space/Territory: private; communal; freedom/restrictions; closed location.

Relationships: teacher-student; student-student; teacher-tutor; permanence; individuals; social engineering.

Common experiences/goals: routines; programme; leisure; adversity; food; eco agenda.

The data analysis chapters evolved from this structure, whereby I analysed the coded data using themes and frameworks from my literature reviews around

previous studies of educational visits and notions of community¹⁴. I also identified and focused upon certain ‘critical incidents’ for detailed analysis¹⁵ and constructed an individual case study of one student to develop the analysis of intersecting themes¹⁶. However, I am conscious that the final construction of my text effectively fixes perceptions and readings. This serves to lessen, or perhaps even contradict, the ambiguous, potentially elusive and invariably complex nature of reality that I am seeking to capture and present. Furthermore the reader is essentially required to accept my account as they are unable to “recover the immediacies of fieldwork for empirical re-inspection” (Geertz, 1988, p6).

In a conscious attempt to avoid the dominance of my own voice and interpretations as an indirect narrator, I strived to jot down numerous verbatim quotes in my fieldnotes. Many of these have been included within the thesis, in addition to quotes obtained from my transcribed interviews, so as to reflect a diversity of voices. These are integrated within the text, to retain their context in relation to my fieldnotes. Notwithstanding the issues around reliability discussed earlier in this chapter, I did so with the intention of portraying the views of the individuals concerned. However, as the sole author and editor of this thesis, I decided which quotes to use and where to use them, and in so doing this potentially gives me power to deploy them to bolster my own arguments. This issue is highlighted in a broader context by Nespor and Barber (1991) who suggest that the writer has potential to exert a power relationship in the way that they choose to represent informants. I adopt the textual convention of using italics for other people’s voices, whilst quotes from my own reflective journal or fieldnotes are in the same font as the rest of the text, since these are my own voice. I distinguish these, however, through the use of single-spacing.

I suspect that my thesis may be of most interest to organisers of educational visits or educational researchers. As such they may have familiarity with either the content, or the approach, but possibly not both. Consequently I started the thesis

¹⁴ See Chapters 6 and 7.

¹⁵ For instance, see ‘The Workout’ in Chapter 10.

¹⁶ See Chapter 8.

with three chapters of introductory rich descriptions, in order to set the scene, draw the reader in, give authenticity to Oaklands as a place, and to portray the key characters as real individuals. To achieve this I consciously adopted some fictional literary conventions around character development and scene setting. In addition, these chapters provide my own credentials for being there and represent a conscious attempt to enlist the faith of the reader to the validity of my account (Geertz, 1988). To avoid interrupting the flow of these narratives I use footnotes to signal any differences in my voice and identity, and to demonstrate awareness of the ways in which I have consciously constructed the text. I also reflect my different voices and identities in the thesis in several ways. For example, my role as participant is expressed through quotes from my reflective journal and as a researcher at the scene through my use of the 'ethnographic present'. I explicitly signal my critical reflections on the data, whilst as constructor and narrator of the thesis I explain my decisions about the style and structure of the text. In a further attempt to underline my reliability as a witness, I weave descriptive detail throughout the forthcoming analysis chapters.

In this chapter I have presented my justification for undertaking an ethnographic case study. I describe some of the issues and concerns I faced during the research and identify specific issues relating to data reliability and research ethics. I hope that the resultant thesis is engaging and clear, but also that it is critically read, in light of the points raised. In the following chapter I situate my thesis within the current body of research literature in the field of educational visits.

Chapter 6

A Review of Literature around Educational Visits

As outlined earlier my thesis investigates the experiences of being on a residential fieldtrip, with an emphasis upon the extent to which participants develop perceptions of belonging to a temporary community. A residential fieldtrip is one example of an educational visit, which in turn is a form of outdoor education. This chapter starts with definitions of these and other related terms.

The fieldtrip I observed was delivering Geography content, following a particular AS examination specification. The trip aims, programme and experiences were inextricably linked to meeting some of these curricular requirements. I therefore include sections in this chapter which provide contextual information on the place of fieldwork within school Geography in England and Wales, the perceived advantages of fieldwork and different approaches to undertaking Geography fieldwork. These are relevant to my analysis of events, discussions and perceptions in subsequent chapters. I also provide a review of current research into educational visits, largely focusing upon the UK, before considering the methodology employed in many such studies.

Terminology

Outdoor education is a sweeping and embracing term which Donaldson & Donaldson defined as “education in, about and for the outdoors” (1958, p17). Nowadays this is slightly re-framed with an emphasis upon learning, but the breadth of content remains. Rickinson et al define outdoor learning as “learning that accrues or is derived from activities undertaken in outdoor locations beyond the classroom” (2004, p9). They suggest that the term embraces three distinct kinds of activity; fieldwork where the focus is primarily upon curriculum learning, outdoor adventure, with a focus on activities promoting personal and interpersonal growth and community projects which are often cross-curricular

projects near to the school. Boyle et al concur with the curricular focus of the term fieldwork, defining it as:

“any component of the curriculum that involves leaving the classroom and involves learning through first-hand experience.”
(2007, p300)

Current policy and local authority regulations have given explicit meaning to the operational term ‘educational visit’. This relates to outdoor learning which involves going off the school site. It does not therefore include, for example, fieldwork within the school grounds and is linked to the requirement to submit formal educational visits paperwork. Educational visits can vary in length from part of a single lesson, to several weeks, and can be just outside the school gate or residential visits to foreign countries. The terms are often interchanged during conversation, although the particular visit I observed can accurately be described by any or all of the terms above.

The Relationship between Geography and Fieldwork

The curriculum subject of Geography is closely associated with opportunities to engage in fieldwork. Bell argues that fieldwork is a unique aspect of the subject, encapsulated by the feeling that:

“There are often fond memories of the geographical residential visit complete with hostel accommodation, packed lunches eaten in the rain, the camaraderie and the realization that geography teachers are human after all.” (2005, p12)

I can personally empathise with this view, whilst the latter two points are of particular relevance to my research into community sentiments and the opportunities for shifting student perceptions of their teachers. Other research suggests that fieldwork is the very essence of the discipline:

“Without fieldwork, Geography is secondhand reporting and armchair analysis, losing much of its involvement with the world, and its original insight, its authority, its contributions for addressing local and global issues and its reason for being.” (Stevens, 2001, p66)

Moreover, the academic significance of fieldwork has been recognized by OFSTED and the DfES, perhaps encapsulated by the view that: “Fieldwork gives opportunities for learning that cannot be replicated in the classroom” (HMI,

1992, p1). The revised National Curriculum (2008) also attaches significant importance to outdoor learning, building upon the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto (2006), and specifically to fieldwork opportunities in Geography.

Fieldwork is perceived by pupils as a popular element within school Geography. It was mentioned by a large number of students as a feature of Geography that they enjoyed (Adey & Biddulph, 2001), whilst Norman & Harrison (2004) found that fieldwork was the third most popular aspect of Geography in their survey of 1172 Year 9 pupils in Brighton and Hove. In Higher Education fieldwork is also popular; Besenyei et al (2004) found that 58/63 undergraduate respondents enjoyed their fieldwork experiences. Other research links enjoyment with the effectiveness of fieldwork, where enjoying the experience also results in students being cognitively more receptive and retentive (Kern & Carpenter, 1986).

Caton (2006) argues that fieldwork has benefits for cognitive learning, but that the academic choice of fieldwork approach channels Geographical learning in a particular direction. Without explicitly judging the merits of each approach he draws upon the typology of Job (1999) which identifies five categories of fieldwork approach. The traditional 'field excursion' is where students are taken on a tour and particular features are pointed out to them. This is the type of fieldtrip I encountered as a pupil at school myself, for example when Mr Laithwaite dictated notes to us in the minibus. 'Field research' is based upon hypothesis testing, usually associated with quantitative data collection and this is the type of fieldwork I led as a teacher during the 1990's. 'Geographical enquiry' is based around a central question or decision making exercise and typified my approach to fieldtrips with school groups between 2000 and 2003. 'Discovery fieldwork' allows students to develop their own focus and study using methods based upon their own interests in a setting, whilst 'sensory fieldwork' encourages sensitivities to environments using all senses. The latter two approaches in particular are more student-centred, with the encouragement of a reflective and receptive manner and the development of an affective response (Caton, 2006). I suggest that to some teachers and students these are regarded as more progressive and enlightened approaches, whilst to others they represent the dumbing down of

academic rigour within Geography. Interestingly GCSE and A level specifications still expect 'field research' or 'geographical enquiry' for coursework assignments and this creates challenges for teachers opting for new qualitative approaches, not least in terms of achieving outcomes that go beyond superficial descriptions (Caton, 2006). Lambert & Balderstone (2010) contend that the examination board preoccupation with cognitive aims, cuts students off from their feelings and their own interpretations of the world. The choice of fieldwork approach, its delivery and differences between ideals and practice contributed to the relationships between teachers and centre tutors on the Oaklands trip. This is explored in detail within Chapter 10.

The Decline of Geography Fieldwork

Despite evidence suggesting the apparent popularity and benefits of fieldwork, Harris (1999) notes that outdoor learning by school students has decreased over recent years. This situation has continued into the twenty-first century where fieldwork in schools is now declining due to a combination of logistical issues in taking pupils out of school, health and safety concerns and the perceived excessive bureaucracy involved in organizing trips (Bell, 2005). These are also linked to the growth of a litigation culture, which Thomas refers to as "a prevailing social trend" (1999, p131), amplified by a few high profile accidents involving children on school visits. Fulbrook (2005) suggests that media reporting may have exacerbated concerns over the risks of litigation against individual teachers, which he claims are minimal provided procedures are followed.

Rickinson et al (2004) suggest that a crowded curriculum and increasingly rigorous assessment requirements diminish the attraction of, and appreciation for, outdoor learning in the UK. In Higher Education, where fieldtrips are also declining, the development of technological alternatives (such as GIS and virtual fieldwork), issues of expense and financing and the time burden on staff are also seen as contributing factors to this trend (Boyle et al, 2007).

The Suggested Value of Educational Visits

A number of research studies have focused specifically upon the breadth of potential benefits derived from educational visits. Fuller et al (2000) refer to these benefits in the form of possible educational objectives. They suggest these are observational skill development, experiential learning, the encouragement of self responsibility for learning, analytical skill development, acquiring a taste for research, fostering respect for the environment, the development of personal skills and the lessening of barriers between staff and students on residential courses. Dillon et al (2005) identify a similar range of benefits, but classify these differently as learning about nature, learning about society, learning about nature and society interactions, learning about oneself, learning to work with others, learning new skills, learning about practical conservation, learning about influencing society and learning research skills. My research is particularly focused upon evolving community perceptions, which I argue cut across many of the categories identified in both these classifications. Wilby (1984) draws a distinction between objectives and outcomes, suggesting many fieldtrips are designed and framed as academic and exam orientated, whilst outcomes are often more pupil centred, in terms of personal and social development. Whilst the distinction may be useful in raising awareness, I suggest that they are not mutually exclusive and that priorities in fact change during the unfolding experiences of a fieldtrip.

Rickinson et al (2004, p20) examined 150 research publications on outdoor learning in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors from around the world and identified four categories of learning impacts. These are:

Cognitive impacts: those pertaining to knowledge, understanding and academic outcomes.

Affective impacts: which encompass attitudes, values, emotions, feelings and beliefs.

Social impacts: such as communication skills, teamwork and leadership.

Behavioural and physical impacts: which relate to personal behaviour and physical fitness.

They do acknowledge that there is inevitable overlap between these categories. They also identify factors that can facilitate or impede the learning of students in outdoor education settings. Programme factors, such as the length of courses, the amount of preparatory/ follow up work and the importance of aligning the format and structure of the programme to the desired outcomes are important considerations. Also they cite participant factors, which relate to the role of learners themselves on a visit, and include issues such as the interests, characteristics and learning styles of the pupils. Thirdly, place factors include visiting new locations which impose learning demands and emotional challenges upon students which, they argue, are not always fully appreciated by teachers or outdoor educators. I found this classification and the intervening factors a useful tool in the initial stages of the coding and analysis of my raw data, although I veered away from it in my analysis chapters, preferring instead to refer to conceptual frameworks which evolved from the literature I review in Chapter 6.

Specific Studies on Educational Visits

This section considers a sample of the findings from previous research studies, which have emphasized a range of cognitive, affective, social and behavioural impacts. Rosenthal & Lee (2009) position their research by offering a critique of traditional 'positivist geography'. They argue that the application of scientific techniques to aspects of the environment risk de-sensitising students to it and suggest:

“It is paradoxical that activities intended to enhance our understanding of an environment can result in increasing our distance from it.”
(ibid, p3)

They support an 'interpretivist approach' to Geography fieldwork, seeking to connect the field worker to their environment with minimum guided input from the teacher. This approach draws upon the use of experiential and sensory activities advocated by Job (1999). On a week-long residential A2 fieldtrip to Morocco twelve students kept a daily reflective journal. Their analysis of these diaries revealed numerous examples of sensory impact, together with 'eureka moments', which they cite as significant evidence of affective learning. However (despite their criticism of positivist Geography) their own research into cognitive

outcomes adopts a quantitative approach by comparing the re-sit examination performance of students who participated on the fieldtrip, against those who did not. In these, trip students increased their marks by an average of 15.5 marks, as opposed to 12.7 for non fieldtrip students. Dierking and Falk (1997) also demonstrated a positive impact of fieldwork on cognitive learning in their survey of a group of 128 adults and children. They discovered that 96% of respondents could specifically recall trips taken in their early days at school. This links to the idea of 'key episodes' (Mackenzie and White, 1982), which are active or colourful events that tend to occur whilst undertaking fieldwork and which remain in the long term memory.

Dillon et al (2005) conducted their research in a range of settings and with different age groups. They found that activities often had a primary focus upon particular cognitive developments, but that other domains subsequently emerged, in some cases to bring more significant benefits. Examples they cite include personal and social developments such as confidence and improved social skills, but also a realization that learning could actually be fun. Teachers also recognized the opportunities to interact with their students in a relaxed and informal environment. These other domains relate to aspects that I explore in detail in relation to the fieldtrip at Oaklands. Nundy (1999) examined the effectiveness of a residential fieldtrip in Hampshire on ten and eleven year old primary students and identified three specific benefits associated with fieldwork. Firstly he noted a positive influence on long term memory, linked to the memorable nature of the location, with the more unique the episode, the more likely it would act as a trigger for the recall of other information. Secondly, he noted affective benefits from the residential experience, whereby improvements in co-operation, perseverance, reliability, initiative and motivation were all noted. Students were also highly positive about peer relationships, especially those relating to shared experiences at the field study centre. Thirdly he identified a 'zone of synergy' between cognitive and affective processes, creating learning outcomes, where improvements in cognitive learning are linked to improvements in affective learning.

A study by Manzanal et al (1999) also revealed a link between cognitive and affective learning. They undertook research with 67 students aged 11-14, who were split into two groups. Both groups completed twenty hours of study on ecosystems, but only one group participated in fieldwork as part of their study time. Knowledge based tests, attitude surveys and interviews were set before and after the study period. They discovered that fieldwork assisted with conceptual understanding and also in developing positive attitudes towards the need to protect ecosystems. Other studies have also demonstrated similar tendencies. Brynjegard (2001) considered the use and impact of gardens at three schools and discovered that students displayed pride and care towards their garden. They were also knowledgeable about native plants and displayed positive attitudes towards nature in general. Andrews (2001) found that participants in an outdoor gardening programme developed problem solving skills and a stronger 'local community' sense, developed through relationships with the plants and gardeners. Ballantyne & Packer (2002) surveyed 580 pupils in Australia between the ages of eight and seventeen years and found that nature based visits were popular amongst students of all ages. Their research also showed an influence on the desire of pupils to look after the environment, but also an enduring impact upon their own household environmental practices. However, Uzzell (1999) is doubtful about the permanence of such attitudinal changes materialising from fieldwork. In his study a group of Year 10 students were asked about environmental issues before, one week after and six weeks after a field trip. Immediately after the trip concern for the environment increased, but by six weeks concern had dipped to below the pre-trip levels. Uzzell (1999) concludes that environmental attitudes are fairly entrenched and are not influenced by fieldwork other than in short term. The perception of impacts beyond the fieldtrip is another area that I consider within my thesis. A study by Nairn (2005) also casts doubt upon the positive impact of fieldtrips, whereby she suggests that fieldwork can serve to reinforce misconceptions held by students prior to the trip. Hope (2009) however directly critiques her study suggesting differentiated outcomes, with preconceptions challenged for some but reinforced for others.

The 'social effectiveness' of 177 Australian High School students attending an outdoor education programme was studied by Purdie et al (2002). They highlighted improvements in communication, functioning in social situations and in all peer gender interactions amongst students. However they found that in 'co-operative teamwork' there was no improvement, suggesting that the improvements were linked to the formation of specific friendships during the five day period, rather than being indicative of an improvement in their ability to get on with people. They suggest:

“The formation of specific friendships could be counter to the development of co-operative teamwork because cliques and gangs become competitive rather than interdependent.”
(ibid, p38)

Farnham and Mutrie (1997) studied a four day residential outdoor education programme in Scotland for nineteen 13-17 year old students with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural issues. They found a reduction in tension, aggression and loud behaviour, together with an improvement in group cohesion evidenced by a willingness to participate in activities and discussions. In follow up interviews with staff and students, six weeks after the visit, these revealed continuation of the improvement to group cohesion, but regression on tension and aggression.

Several studies highlight the complexity and inter-related nature of multiple impacts. The effectiveness of residential field courses amongst 365 Geography and Geography related UK Higher Education students was examined by Boyle et al (2007). They based their research upon the assumption that fieldwork is good if it triggers positive emotional responses. They proposed a chain of potential emotional and learning responses, with high confidence producing low anxiety and a resultant high motivation which leads to deeper, high order learning and in turn generates higher academic performance. This contrasts with surface learning where the motivation is external, driven by the desire to pass an examination, is associated with anxiety about failure and can feel like an imposition (Moon, 2004). Boyle et al (2007) found that students who demonstrated very positive affective responses, displayed higher motivation levels and deeper approaches to learning. They also discovered that issues around room sharing, working

outdoors all day and physical challenges were factors which generated most anxiety and therefore were likely to disrupt the processes they outlined. Cook (2008) explored the perceptions of 338 Year 9 students, prior to and after a day of fieldwork. Her findings revealed a complex variety of educational, personal, socio-cultural and spatial aspects. The most widely cited educational experiences were the opportunity to undertake first hand observation in the field, the opportunity to clarify understanding and aspects of practical involvement. This latter point was sometimes linked to traditional quantitative data collection techniques, including using equipment, sampling, testing and measuring. The personal experience most commonly cited was 'fun', whilst working in groups and being with friends were frequently noted as socio-cultural aspects. An interesting distinction is drawn between group work (an educational activity organized by the teacher) and teamwork which she defines as "a more spontaneous, student-led social interaction" (ibid, p73) and is a distinctive social benefit of out of the classroom learning. The novelty of visiting a different location was perceived to be a spatial benefit of the experience, which concurs with Rosenthal and Lee (2009) who emphasize that residential visits introduce new environments and new social situations:

"By removing students from their familiar environment and routine or 'comfort zone', residential visits expose them, making them more susceptible to new experiences." (ibid, p1)

They suggest that students have to be open to different ways of doing things and that the experience therefore has an emotional effect.

Besenyi et al (2004) referred to the difficulty of quantifying many of the impacts of a fieldtrip, a point that I feel justifies the approach and methodology I have adopted. They surveyed undergraduate students, via 63 questionnaires and a follow up focus group interview with six students. All but one student felt that fieldwork was an effective way to learn about the environment, with the most frequently cited reasons being the opportunity to put theory into practice and to gain 'hands on' experience. In terms of personal skills, communication, learning to work in groups, enhanced confidence and time management were seen as areas in which students developed. As such, Besenyi et al (2004) contend that many fieldwork experiences are immeasurable (for instance memories and life

experiences) and that it is therefore hard to quantify the benefits. This also links with the assertion of Andrews et al (2003) who conclude that the sustained informal encounters on a fieldtrip are a valuable, but not overtly recognised, part of the curriculum.

Research by Amos and Reiss (2006) covered a variety of fieldtrips involving 423 key stage 3 pupils and thirteen teachers from ten London schools. Their findings highlighted an underlying difficulty in accepting comments from respondents at face value, a point which also gives support to my adopting an ethnographic approach. All teachers felt that there were significant cognitive impacts, although ten of them were unable to give any specific examples. Teachers also reported that attitudes to participation were good, and better than at school, citing improved enthusiasm and motivation. Levels of trust between pupils also increased, whilst they more readily accepted rules, especially the vocal and dominant males. All teachers observed new friendships being formed, which sometimes continued at school afterwards. Pupil findings revealed that 97% enjoyed their visit, but when asked to describe their two best memories, only 1% of responses referred to learning something new. A significant proportion (41%) also referred to a problem during the trip, typical examples being ‘an argument with friends’, ‘strange food’ and ‘horrible showers’ (Amos & Reiss, 2006). They conclude that the:

“...diffuse, non-subject specific effect of residential fieldwork is likely to be familiar to anyone who has run residential trips but probably needs further investigation.” (ibid, p7)

This is a need that my thesis attempts to meet, albeit in the specific and non-generalisable way outlined in Chapter 4. Similar intangible outcomes are identified by Lambert & Balderstone, who comment upon the “intense group feelings of achievement and togetherness” (2010, p279) that often result from residential fieldwork. These are the very temporary notions around community sentiments that my research seeks to uncover.

Research Methodologies Employed in Previous Studies of Educational Visits

There have been a large number of studies into educational visits in different contexts but many of these have common foci, or similar approaches. Bitgood (1989) found that during the 1980's much of the research into educational visits was focused upon what children learn, or on how fieldtrips are conducted. Rickinson et al (2004) believed that this situation changed little in the intervening period. They also concluded that research on outdoor education was largely dominated by quantitative studies which follow a typical pre-test and post-test questionnaire, focusing upon particular impacts of outdoor learning. Hattie et al (1997) also found this and identified the need for a greater understanding of process in outdoor education. They specifically advocated the use of qualitative research methods (most notably interviews) alongside quantitative approaches. They also suggested that most studies tended to concentrate on summative, as opposed to formative, aspects of visits. Since the late 1990's there have been some qualitative and mixed method studies on student experiences of outdoor learning, such as the research of Ballantyne and Packer (2002) and Farnham and Mutrie (1997). However, there seem to be very few studies that call themselves ethnographies and which specifically focus upon outdoor education. Rickinson et al (2004) suggest that Andrews (2001) and Brynjegard (2002) use 'ethnographic observations' in their research. Although both do adopt participant observation as a means of data collection, neither provide rich descriptions, seek to acquire nor convey a sense of immersion, discuss the methodology employed, nor make reference to reflexivity, implicitly or explicitly. I suggest that by framing my research as an ethnography, exclusively adopting qualitative data collection methods and focusing upon a case study I am making a specific but unique contribution to the field of research on educational visits.

Concluding Discussion

This chapter provides a contextual backdrop to the academic field where I suggest my thesis rests, namely a study looking at the impacts and process of an educational visit. There are elements from other research studies which overlap with the content of my thesis. These include the significance of 'key episodes'

within the fieldwork experience (Mackenzie & White, 1982), the impacts of fieldwork on personal and social relations (Dillon et al, 2005; Purdie et al, 2002), notions that learning can be fun (Dillon et al, 2005; Cook, 2008), issues around group cohesion (Farnham & Mutrie, 1997), peer relationships (Nundy, 1999) and changing relationships between teachers and students (Dillon et al, 2005). Questions around the permanence of impacts beyond the timespan of a particular visit are contested in various studies (Ballantyne & Packer, 2002; Uzzell, 1999; Farnham & Mutrie, 1997) and this is also an issue I consider within my analysis chapters.

I found other studies useful in different ways during my research. The classification of Rickinson et al (2004) proved a useful tool in the early stages of my data analysis, whilst the typology of Job (1999) was a helpful framework I used in the analysis of relationships between the teachers and the field centre tutors.

Finally, I suggest that in attempting an ethnographic case study, I am approaching the field from a different methodological perspective from much of the current research. By adopting this approach I seek to capture some of the diffuse social outcomes that Amos & Reiss (2006) suggest warrant further consideration, together with some specific insights into the intense togetherness suggested by Lambert & Balderstone (2010). Such elements of togetherness are sometimes equated with community sentiments, and this is a body of literature that I examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

What is a Community?

Notions around community inform and directly contribute to my analysis of the week at Oaklands. Furthermore, my contention is that the actions and sentiments of many participants may suggest the development of a temporary and fluid community. This chapter provides a review of literature around the concept of community, providing insights into the conceptual framework used to interrogate the data in the following analysis chapters.

Context and Definitions

My interest in the concept of community originates from my undergraduate Geography dissertation in which I considered the impact of second homes on rural communities within particular districts on the Isle of Anglesey (Gee, 1990). My focus was primarily on the perceived impact of English second home owners upon the decline of traditional Welsh-speaking agricultural based communities. Although I used the word ‘community’ extensively throughout my dissertation, I failed to devote much attention to understanding what might be meant by the term. This issue still persists now, with general familiarity and willingness to refer to notions of community, but with little agreement upon its precise meaning. Day suggests that it is one of the most ‘elastic’ terms in social science but regards this as a benefit:

“Precisely because it is so elastic and various in its meanings, the idea of community continues to grip people’s imaginations, and even grows in significance as it takes on new applications.”
(2006, p1)

The breadth of interpretations was demonstrated by Hillery (1955) who reviewed journal articles on community at the time and identified ninety-four definitions of the term. The only consensual element he could find was an involvement “with people” (ibid, p117). Gereluk seems to concur with the centrality of people, suggesting that: “The basic human function of interacting with others forms the basis of community” (2006, p59). This also endorsed by Day (2006) who, more specifically, states:

“The essential meaning of community...refers to those things which people have in common, which bind them together and give them a sense of belonging with one another.” (ibid, p1)

Belonging is also a key sentiment according to Delanty (2003), based upon the premise that humans identify and feel solidarity with those around them, especially when they share experiences. Shared experiences for participants are a key feature of residential fieldwork and I suggest these were manifested during the week at Oaklands.

Lee & Newby (1983) have classified definitions of the term community into three categories. Firstly they contend that community is used as a geographical expression, to imply a fixed and bounded location. This interpretation places locality as the key determining factor and was typified by the work of Parsons (1951) who argued that community referred to a social grouping where people “share a common territorial area as their base of operations for daily activities” (ibid, p91). This is perhaps the most rudimentary interpretation where a boundary is drawn around a grouping and the term merely becomes a classificatory label for the particular group. At a simple level I argue that the bounded territory at Oaklands equates to a fixed location, although the short term nature of the bounded experience was perhaps not envisaged in this interpretation. Secondly the term is sometimes used to refer to a localized social system, focusing upon the network of relationships occurring. This version makes no reference to, nor assumptions about, the quality of the relationships, merely to their existence. In this meaning it is effectively a given that accompanies lived interdependence which ‘imposes itself’ upon people (Abrams & McCulloch, 1976). During the Oaklands fieldtrip I observed an evolving network of complex social relationships, albeit in a temporary form, and these are analysed in Chapter 9. Thirdly, community is used to refer to a sense of identity where there is a spirit of commonality amongst a body of people based around their shared experiences. Here there is a:

“sense of common identity, enduring ties of affiliation and harmony based upon personal knowledge and face to face contact.”
(Lee & Newby, 1983 p52).

This interpretation is perhaps more of an idealized and pure concept, against which examples are sometimes compared and to which people strive. I have considered the extent to which certain participants perceived the Oaklands experience in an idealised way, perhaps exemplified by Dan and his reference to the ‘magic’ of Oaklands (See Chapter 2). However, for some:

“Community remains an elusive prospect, a goal that is tantalizingly plausible and yet never quite achieved. This leads some to conclude that it is best regarded as an ideal, a philosophical dream, rather than a real phenomenon.” (Day, 2006, p9-10)

Other commentators have blended these three categories of definition. For example Frankenberg suggests that “the bases of community are locality and community sentiment” (1966, p15) where locality defines the place and community sentiments are generated by shared living and reciprocity. Day (2006) suggests that community is both an ‘entity’, namely a bounded locality, and a ‘quality’ in terms of a grouping that engenders emotional responses. This interpretation underpins my understanding and usage of the term ‘community’ within this thesis, but in order to shape my analysis I sought specific detail on possible community characteristics. Frazer (1999) identifies a number of elements, not all of which she suggests need to be present, but none of which are sufficient alone to create a community. These are a bounded area, a dense network of multiple relationships, a quality of identification amongst members and shared interests, values, norms or meanings. Based upon these elements, some resulting characteristics of community would, she argues, be commitment, reciprocity, solidarity, wholeness and personalism. Moreover she contends that experiences of community may only be:

“...euphoric and fleeting... (when) members experience a centred and bounded entity; they engage in exchanges and sharing that are personalized; the orientation to each other and to the whole engages the person...it is from such occasions that the sense of community is achieved.” (ibid, p83)

This definition encapsulates some of the feelings and experiences I sought to capture and represent. Social co-operation is also central to many ideas about community whereby individuals show concern and consideration for each other (Day, 2006), whilst other interpretations emphasize the importance of common identity, personal knowledge and face to face contact (Lee & Newby, 1983). A

further feature in several definitions is the self sustaining nature of the unit, often associated with restricted contact to the outside world (Lee & Newby, 1983) and this latter element I specifically address in Chapter 8.

Community Studies

Influenced by my previous academic encounters with the concept of ‘community’, I now consider a few significant Geographical works on community. Much research has focused upon the comparison between rural and urban areas, building upon the distinction between ‘Gemeinschaft’ and ‘Gesellschaft’ advocated by Tonnies (1887). His original work sought to compare the traditional agrarian lifestyle with the newly developing urban way of life, by considering social relationships. He assumed that all human relationships were created by human will and the willingness of individuals to associate. Tonnies (1887) distinguished between two kinds of will, rational (‘kurwille’) and natural (‘wesenwille’). The former involved desire to attain a definite end, whilst in the latter the relationship was considered valuable in itself. ‘Gemeinschaft’ is usually translated as ‘community’ and Tonnies used the term to describe human relationships which were personal, harmonious, enduring and based upon natural will (Loomis, 1957). He linked communal ties to traditional village communities where there was a stable social order, mobility was limited and the family and church were the two key social controls. ‘Gesellschaft’ is translated as ‘society’ or ‘association’, which according to Tonnies (1887) was characterized by impersonal, superficial and transitory relationships which are based upon rational will and the desire for economic progress. Frankenberg (1966) suggested that rather than the dichotomy proposed by Tonnies, there is a continuum between the two extremes of ‘truly rural’ and ‘thoroughly urban’. The former may seem to echo the Gemeinschaft position, based upon an established and traditional agricultural social system but:

“As we move towards the end of the continuum, redundancy in social relations decreases, social relationships become less complex, processes are formalized and bureaucratic forms introduced.”
(Frankenberg, 1966, p282)

Community studies in the UK tended to be investigations of small, self contained social units. These were particularly common between the 1930's and the 1970's in both Geography and Sociology and often took the form of individual case studies. In particular three locations were regularly studied; villages/rural areas, small towns and working class areas within cities. Although varied in nature and location these studies did serve to foster strong perceptions of ideas about traditional communities. These were based around the ideas of proximity, continuity and stability (Day, 2006) and where individuals experienced multiple and repeated contacts with the same people. Small towns were seen as self sufficient and inward looking, thereby able to command the commitment and loyalty of their inhabitants as in the case of Banbury (Stacey, 1960) and Blaenau Ffestiniog (Emmett, 1982). Villages were the archetypal setting for traditional communities, where the conception of a rural idyll was associated with 'genuine' community life (Newby, 1985). As small, self contained units, with an underlying dependence upon agriculture, there was a strong common purpose. Working class districts tended to have social, economic and political conditions which bound residents through their shared experiences, attitudes, ambitions and outlook (Young & Willmot, 1962).

Community studies began to decline in number and importance from the 1970's, and were criticized for being misrepresentations of reality, or for becoming irrelevant in modern society:

“As a concept community appeared to be rooted firmly in the conditions of a disappearing social order... this kind of all embracing, self contained, social milieu seems totally at odds with modern conditions.” (Day, 2006, p92)

Nonetheless, when I was a Geography undergraduate between 1987 and 1990 such studies were still considered academically significant.

The Loss of Community

Many discussions of community concentrate upon the loss or decline of community. Lee & Newby (1983) suggest that whilst Britain may have experienced a loss of community, it is unclear precisely what or how this has

been lost. However, Newby (1985) argues that one feature which has been lost is the traditional agricultural community in England, where modernization in farming and the influx of newcomers into villages altered social relationships in what were previously enclosed and self sufficient entities, focused upon a common purpose. Bauman (2001) suggests that traditional neighbourhood institutions, for instance corner shops, which previously brought people together in daily interactions have also declined. Individuals therefore do not tend to have connections, or even daily interactions, with those around them. Wittel (2001) also contends that modernization has removed social activity from localities and suggests that mobility and new forms of communication, have 'emptied meaning' from the term community. Bauman even argues that community is now 'defunct' other than in a "community of non-belonging" (2001, p68). He cites the proliferation of reality TV as a symptom of this whereby people form attachments with personalities rather than real people.

Problems with the Concept of Community

For many commentators, community is a value-laden term with in-built positive connotations (Lee & Newby, 1983). Williams (1985) suggested that the term was never used unfavourably and felt there was an underlying problem of perspective, with retrospective views hinting at happier times. This opinion is shared by Pahl who sees community linked to "nostalgic and romantic notions of a mythical past" (1996, p89). Williams explained this in terms of:

"An idealization based upon a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability which served to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time." (1985, p 45)

He also argued that, contrary to common ideas about traditional rural communities, they were actually a harsh, brutal and exploitative existence and concluded that in reality a community did exist, but in the form of "the mutuality of the oppressed" (ibid, p104). Positive interpretations are therefore prone to criticism as romanticized simplifications, whilst any focus upon relationships tends to concentrate upon the perceived positive attributes of harmony, affection, consensus and stability (Lee & Newby, 1983). Overly romantic notions and

perceptions of community sentiment based upon shared adversity at Oaklands are both addressed in my analysis chapters.

A second body of criticism surrounding the term ‘community’ relates to the potential neglect of individuals. It is suggested that differences and individuality are often overlooked by observers of communities, who are instead pre-occupied with a concern to emphasize what people have in common (Frazer, 1999). This can exacerbate the impression that communities are homogeneous and stable entities. More concerning perhaps is the suggestion that individuals could feel repressed in their desire to express their own individual views or feelings. Here the collective rights of the group can swamp those of individuals and group norms may cause individuals to lower their expectations to the level of accepted practices in order to fit in (Gereluk, 2006). Alternatively, Cohen (1985) suggests that individual understandings of the label ‘community’ are so flexible that this enables differences to appear as similarities. This can occur where people may claim to feel part of the same community, but in fact their outlooks and perspectives are different, other than having a common feeling of belonging.

A third category of problems pertain to issues surrounding difficulties in defining the term. Aside from the lack of consensus previously identified, there are specific arguments over the extent to which a defined area and the requirement to be self contained should be pre-requisites. Stacey (1969) argues that occupying the same space does not automatically result in the formation of the relationships or attitudes necessary to create feelings of community. Equally she suggests that connections with the outside world are virtually inescapable in most settings and therefore questions the assumption that a truly bounded and self contained entity can exist¹⁷. This is a pertinent issue within my analysis and one where active intervention by the accompanying teachers sought to manage conditions to exclude external influences. Linked to the search for essential elements is the suggestion that if some features of community are detected, there may be a tendency to assume that others are also present (Day 2006). This is a concern

¹⁷ Such debates have links with my discussion of case study (See Chapters 5 and 12) and inform my analysis in Chapter 9.

that I am mindful of, although it is blurred by the lack of consensus over whether any elements are pre-requisites, which they are, or how many might be required.

Judgements about the 'spirit of community' inevitably depend upon the subjective preferences and perspectives of individuals and even the mood they are feeling at the time. For instance, in the rural village many traditional farm workers consider the community to have been lost since they perceived a community arising out of living and working together over several generations. Newcomers from urban areas however are actually attracted by the prospect of living in a community and they tend to interpret a vibrant community on the basis of a flourishing network of village clubs, and societies (Newby, 1985).

Alternative Interpretations of Community

Several of the elements within traditional community interpretations (e.g. face to face contacts, a self contained bounded entity) have been displaced and as a consequence the term is taking on new meanings. Even in the 1960's Stacey (1969) noticed the distancing between place and social relationships, whilst more recent changes in society have led to declining self sufficiency and distinctiveness of local settings throughout the UK.

Although there is considerable attention given to the decline of traditional communities there are also arguments that community is re-inventing itself in new ways, most notably in the form of virtual communities (Day 2006). Delanty (2003) argues that technological developments in global communications have resulted in the 'cosmopolization' of community based around long distance and instantaneous social networks. These are still underpinned by a sense of belonging, but individuals may 'belong' to overlapping and multiple communities. Day (2006) suggests that community is now less of an highly integrated entity, where people are the same, but more a consideration of the relationships that someone develops:

“There is no single bounded unit which persists unchanged through time and absorbs the full commitment of its members; boundaries are variable, relationships are episodic and loyalties are qualified and provisional.” (ibid, p114)

Other new interpretations also reveal a loosening of the traditional meanings of the term. Tam (1998) proposes that any group where people interact can exhibit the characteristics of community, citing examples of schools and businesses. Little (2002) applies the concept to shared interest groups such as sports clubs and PTA's where feelings of belonging are generated. Bauman suggests that attempts at community manifest themselves at one-off events such as music festivals and sporting events, in what he terms an "aesthetic community" (2001, p72). These temporary and fluid communities are based around issues and interests and this interpretation seems to echo the 'fleeting and euphoric' experiences cited by Frazer (1999).

An alternative position questions the very validity of the concept. Rapport analyses community not as an entity, but as more "an assemblage of individual lives which influence, overlap and abut against each other" (1993, p43) in which people participate in fragmented social experiences. This view was actually articulated by at least one student on the fieldtrip and is examined in Chapter 7. Cohen (1985) argues that communities only exist in the minds of members. He claims that they are symbolically constructed, subjectively interpreted by individuals and are therefore not objectively observable. I reject his latter assertion and aim to demonstrate evidence of community at Oaklands from my participation and observation. The increased fluidity around definitions of community facilitates this intention and I have sought to uncover community elements together with fleeting and euphoric experiences.

Community in Education

The previous sections in this chapter have offered a broad context to academic debates around notions of community. I now propose to briefly consider use of the term specifically in relation to educational settings. Gereluk (2006) suggests that, contrary to declining and re-inventing notions of community generally, in educational contexts there is an increased use of and desirability for the concept. This was reflected most notably in several policy initiatives in the early years of

the twenty-first century, which encouraged schools to embrace and foster community through direct teaching and participation (DfCSF, 2008; DfES, 2003; OFSTED, 2002). In school settings there is again frequent usage of the term, but a lack of explicit understanding about its meaning:

“Community is placed in policy and school documents in various ways, never fully explored or expanded, only to be left dangling.”
(Gereluk, 2006, p12)

As a consequence it is: “a recurring aim in education that captures and bewilders educators” (ibid, p17). She suggests that schools inherently exhibit several important elements of community life in the form of social relationships, common aims/objectives/values and shared customs or habits. This is especially the case in faith schools, of which St. Catherine’s is an example. Sergeovanni (1996) regards community as central to school life, suggesting that community building within school is the best way to improve teaching and learning. He argues that this is due to improved relationships between and amongst teachers and students. Furthermore he argues that schools should not be formal organizations built around structures or agreements, but communities bound together by common goals. Relationships and common goals are features that I analyse in forthcoming chapters.

Calderwood acknowledges the difficulty in fostering a community in educational settings, suggesting it is: “a slippery state of social relations...it is not a commodity easily obtained” (2000, p2). Despite this he also argues that schools do create the pre-conditions for community by virtue of the lived, day to day experience that come from being in a school. Community can emerge through the shared participation of its members, in both the celebration of success and the solidarity of adversity. Calderwood (2000) also attaches importance to the informal social relationships that develop within schools and which, he argues, are as important determinants in developing a sense of community at formal times such as assemblies and lessons. Gereluk (2006) cites the importance of specific factors in creating the conditions conducive to community building. The physical environment is one such variable, whereby open hallways and meeting spaces facilitate informal networking, which makes a community more likely to flourish. Equally she suggests that smaller staff-student ratios are also more

likely to increase the likelihood of stronger community relationships. In the following chapters I analyse the influence of physical spaces, together with the management and organisation of students, in contributing to the development of community sentiments at Oaklands.

Conclusions and Implications for my Research

There is ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the widespread and varied uses of the term ‘community’ which is both elastic and subjective, but it is based around ideas of human interactions and belonging. There is contested discussion over the importance, viability and the requirement of a bounded setting, together with questions over the nature of relationships involved. There are a variety of contested values and characteristics associated with community which include common experience, commitment, mutuality, reciprocity, solidarity, co-operation, common identity, self sufficiency, shared living, and face to face contact. For some, stability and harmony are essential pre-requisites, whilst for others community feelings are fleeting and euphoric. The term is viewed as misleading, neglecting individual rights, rooted in an outdated society and prone to generalisation. Nonetheless, despite these difficulties, it remains a relevant and much debated concept in academic discourses, and one which underpins my thesis.

More specifically this review of literature around community raises a number of issues which informed my data collection and shaped my analysis. Firstly I was conscious of the ambiguity surrounding the term and mindful of the implications as to what this might mean for the fieldtrip at Oaklands, whilst also noting the fluidity of its use. On balance, however, I feel this allowed me the freedom to analyse my data around general guiding themes, and to devise and refine my own definitions and understandings of what might be meant by community. However I was also aware that every individual (myself included) could possibly have different perceptions and expectations, thereby exacerbating the difficulty in documenting, analysing and representing community perceptions.

In order to satisfy myself that I could refer to community in relation to the Oaklands trip I felt the need to verify both the 'entity' and the 'quality' aspects of the term as identified by Day (2006), whilst accepting the temporary nature of the fieldtrip experience. This short timespan would have been potentially problematic in traditional interpretations of community, but I was re-assured by the suggestion that even fleeting and euphoric moments could be equated with a spirit of community (Frazer, 1999). Throughout my data analysis I looked for the occurrence and recurrence of elements which could contribute to perceptions of community, including the ideas of a bounded setting and multiple social relationships (Lee & Newby, 1983). I also focused upon common experiences (Calderwood, 2000), sentiments of belonging (Delanty, 2003) and feelings of shared adversity (Williams, 1985). I was aware of the potential impact of romanticized notions, either through the over attributing of explanations to community factors, or by positively reflecting upon events retrospectively (Pahl, 1996). I examined the significance and actuality of restricted opportunities for contact with the outside world (Stacey, 1969; Lee & Newby, 1983) in conjunction with the interventions by staff to manage such influences. Other community forming factors such as space and physical characteristics (Gereluk, 2006), informal relationships (Sergeovanni, 1996) and common aims (Gereluk, 2006) are discussed in separate analysis chapters. The analysis section begins with the next chapter, focusing upon an individual student on the trip.

Chapter 8

James

Observations and Commentary

As an introduction to the data analysis chapters within the thesis, I focus here upon a case study of an individual student on the fieldtrip to compare some of his experiences of becoming part of the temporary community with teacher perspectives on this process. I signpost recurrent themes and discuss these in relation to the literature previously discussed, highlighting the analytical framework for my analysis of the residential experience.

James first came to my attention after the evening meal on Monday, when I noticed that he chose to spend his free time sitting alone in front of the fireplace, reading a book. Throughout the day he had, from my perspective, inconspicuously participated in the induction, meals and fieldwork, where a group ethic apparently pervaded. Upon reflection, the packed nature of the first day, coupled with the establishment of routines and a shared common focus upon the first fieldwork task had served to override the opportunity for individual choice or expression, or certainly my observation of it. Responding organically to this early observation, I decided to make James one potential focus of my observations throughout the week. This initial encounter, in addition to drawing attention to the issue of neglecting individuals, also raised some questions for me about the use of space within the field study centre.

Later that evening I asked Janet about James. She explained that he was a pupil from Mereside High School (an 11-16 comprehensive school in a small market town, fifteen miles from St. Catherine's) who entered the sixth form in September 2008. She added that he was the student she was most concerned about on the trip, mainly due to his lack of social interaction with the others. To address this she had spoken (in confidence) with two pupils on the trip whom she knew well, and who were "*key, bubbly characters*." She asked them to try and include him in activities that were going on and to generally keep an eye on him. She had also engineered it so that they were sharing a dormitory with him. Janet

saw the fieldtrip as an opportunity to integrate him into the group, feeling that he was isolated within the class. Janet recalled that when he first arrived in the sixth form, in September, he was very keen and enthusiastic. However she felt that he had really changed as the year had progressed, becoming increasingly introverted as he failed to make any friends. From her perspective: *“This week is make or break for him, not academically but socially.”* This illustrated the view of Janet that the educational experience of a residential fieldtrip had the potential to make changes in individuals, to influence social interactions and to create new group solidarities.

In my fieldnotes, there were several occasions during the week when James seemed to be participating socially and enjoying himself. On Tuesday night Georgina did the 11 pm check of dormitories to ensure everyone was accounted for, at which point it was discovered that James was missing. Anxiously, she decided to follow up a suggestion from one of the students who reported that he was last seen about an hour previously with a group of three girls. She went to their dormitory and, just as she was asking them if they knew where he was, he fell out of the wardrobe where he had been hiding, to the great hilarity of himself and the other students. It was against the rules to go in other students’ dormitories (particularly of the opposite gender), but in this instance Georgina decided to let it go: *“I was so taken aback. I was relieved to find him, you know. I was really worried about him, and then it was so refreshing to see him having a laugh and enjoying himself.”*

After dinner on Wednesday, James waited behind in the dining hall, with a group of four girls, chatting with Janet. He often made reference to the green and natural environment of Oaklands and seemed to appreciate the surroundings, whilst also longing for the convenience of home: *“I’ve never spent so much time with nature...I think I’m a right city boy. I can’t cope without my wi-fi, facebook and my Starbucks (Laughter).”* Janet later suggested to me that the lack of internet access was beneficial to students like James: *“Those who are not confident in making friends, they can’t just go and plug themselves into a computer and stay isolated. They’ve got to kind of follow the group.”* The physical isolation of the centre, coupled with the lack of mobile phone signal and

internet provision, potentially served to create a temporary, bounded setting which in turn may facilitate the formation of community feelings. These features also served to highlight different perspectives on the merits (or otherwise) of the lack of communication opportunities with the outside world.

On Wednesday evening James had been sitting by the fire reading his book when Janet, Dan and Georgina all came down and sat down on the vacant chairs next to him. His immediate reaction was: *“Do you want me to go?”* They replied that it was *“his space”* and of course he should stay. Within about twenty minutes the fireplace had become a gathering point for a dozen students, all actively engaged in conversation, including James. Later that evening, Janet suggested that he had really benefitted from the trip and was pleased by how things were going. On Thursday Dan appeared to concur with this view when, unprompted, he commented: *“We’ve had one or two outsiders who now seem enclosed in the group...but now he’s happy, he’s smiling and he’s engaged.”* Dan also hinted at cohesion amongst the whole group, whilst acknowledging individual differences: *“They seem to have the view that we accept – even if we do not necessarily like each other - and get on, but you know they’re one of us so we look after them...there is a group tolerance.”* He linked this to the residential experience and specifically being at Oaklands: *“It has a magic about the place which infects everyone, erm and it’s worked on this trip too. You come into this little cocoon and that is very beneficial for the group, it’s good for relationship building and its magic.”* This interpretation supports the notion of a bounded entity, whilst also revealing a possible romanticized view of the experience and setting.

Other events suggested that these views held by Dan (about the magic of the place and benefits for relationship building) were perhaps not held by James himself, nor indeed some of the other students. On the Friday there was a whole group photograph, organised after lunch on the front lawn, prior to departure. No-one could find James and after much searching, the photograph was taken without him. There was a strong suspicion that he was purposefully avoiding it and Georgina hypothesised that with the trip nearly over, he was no longer making an effort to fit in any more. This casts doubt upon the permanent changes

that Janet expressed hope for at the outset of the week and suggests that individuals may employ coping strategies to fit in out of expediency.

I interviewed James on the Thursday afternoon. He was working alone in one of the classrooms, although there were two other groups of pupils in the room on other benches. I felt conscious of the presence of these other students and consequently my questioning was carefully worded, so as to avoid potential difficulty or embarrassment for James. Equally, I was mindful that suggesting we move somewhere else, more private, would seem to be a different arrangement to the other student interviews I had conducted and I did not wish to be seen to be making alternative arrangements. Despite this, I was taken aback by the frank responses I obtained and by James' perceptions of the fieldtrip which were at odds, in many different respects, to all the other interviews I conducted with both students and teachers from the school.

Firstly, he actively appreciated the architecture, style and grandeur of the building and also the attractive physical setting, despite his previously stated affinity with an urban lifestyle. He was also unique in hinting at the notion of initial false impressions that I actually felt too: *"You saw at first impression an amazingly historic building, somewhere that teaches people as a flagship of the local authority. Well, I think they could have provided better facilities, I mean it's rancid in the toilets and showers."* The general impressions and interpretations of the week that he shared with me focused upon the buildings and grounds, rather than on people, events or social relationships. This may have been his interpretation of my questions, or alternatively may have been a conscious attempt to keep the conversation away from issues he was less keen to discuss – for example, relationships, or potential feelings of isolation. This may also reflect a limitation in my use of interviews as a research method, highlighting that my data here is a narrative constructed for me by James. Nonetheless, I felt that he did view me as different from the teachers and that my distance as a researcher resulted in him sharing feelings and thoughts with me that the teachers were clearly oblivious to. James also stressed that he felt: *"removed from civilization, not having any internet or phone signal."* I asked him whether he felt there was any sense of 'community' by virtue of living

together at the centre, with shared routines, common goals, or feelings of belonging in a bounded and isolated setting. His response: *“No, not really, just a group of students who have been put together”* revealed an awareness of the artificiality and temporary nature of the experience. This view also contrasts significantly with the romanticised ‘cocoon’ metaphor used by Dan.

James was also ambivalent about the blurring of the boundaries between school and home in this environment. He was conscious of the intrusion upon his privacy, saying that he felt he was being observed by the teachers. (Nonetheless he reported that he liked the teachers and felt that he had a good working relationship with them.) Dan had previously commented upon this as a distinctive benefit of a residential experience. Dan also referred to a temporal element whereby, without the strict regime of lessons, students were able to use their time more flexibly to write up their findings. This he referred to as ‘blending’ and commented of his students: *“They’re working in little groups and being able to have a break and a cuppa and a biscuit – it’s blending – there isn’t such a distinction between social enjoyment and work.”* He progressed to imply that this made the students better motivated and more productive. James, however, felt that he had worked less hard than if he was at school stating: *“I feel de-motivated and uninterested from overexposure.”*

The tone of the interview with James felt quite intense and serious, in contrast to my other student interviews in which the informants were relaxed, cheerful and bubbly. He seemed to give careful thought to his responses, often pausing before responding with answers which were succinct and eloquent. He also seemed to appreciate the fact that I was taking the time to consider his views. He concluded the interview with the comment: *“I wish I’d stayed at home”*, whilst also reporting that his most memorable experiences were: *“...being cold, bored and not being able to wait to leave.”*

On 3 April (three weeks after the trip) I interviewed Janet back at her school, where she acknowledged that she may have interpreted the situation with James wrongly: *“I thought it had done him the world of good. I thought he really came out of himself”* but subsequent events proved this not to have had a lasting

impact. She also felt let down because she had tried to manage his integration into the group and felt that this would have been successful, had he been willing to co-operate: *“We were really quite angry and upset because we had gone out of our way to ask students to include him.”* This suggests that Janet, in her role as teacher, felt responsible for creating feelings of community on the trip and that the failure of James to integrate with the group was a concrete and unsuccessful outcome of the trip. She clearly perceived herself having a social engineering role, which also manifested itself her attitude towards internet access. Janet recalled that after the trip he had become even more isolated in lessons, appearing to engage and relate less with his peers. Dan agreed, citing one occasion when he put his head on the desk and appeared to fall asleep throughout an hour long lesson. Janet was clear in laying the responsibility with James: *“He isolated himself”*, before he finally announced that he was leaving school altogether. This decision, they felt, reflected a deeper unhappiness with school, evidenced in his relief at leaving: *“He came to tell us that the decision had been made and he was actually leaving. On his last day he brought us some sweets as a gift. He was so bubbly again. It was like a weight off his shoulders.”*

Dan still felt that James was positive about the trip: *“I think he enjoyed it, but he’d already made up his mind that he was not staying (at school). I think he became part of the group and enjoyed it, but that didn’t make enough of a difference in the end...he was miserable and he was an outsider and was obviously going through a phase of I don’t like school. I’m not friends with anybody. I think we turned that round on the trip.”* This perhaps shows how he was labelled by staff as part of the group and also highlights possible overly positive interpretations about events on the trip. Since he left the school, Janet commented that she had not heard any of the other students talk about him, other than when they were looking at photographs in lessons in which he appeared: *“It was almost as though that week happened in isolation as far as their relationship with him. It was all very odd.”*

These observations highlight the contrasting perspectives of James and the teachers, over a range of issues including privacy, space and group interaction, which I will now expand on.

Analysis and Emerging Themes

In this section I discuss a number of emerging themes around community in relation to events surrounding James, before broadening my analysis to the wider fieldtrip.

Perceptions on Space and Place

Firstly, I consider the use of space within the centre and, in particular, the interpretation of places within the centre for private and public use. James clearly struggled to find a private space and felt repressed by the lack of privacy. His dormitory, with the carefully selected students, was not somewhere that James felt comfortable, neither socially nor physically. He preferred to socialise in one of the girls dormitories, where he was discovered on more than one occasion during the week. The fireplace, however, was his preferred location and during his free time he would frequently pull up a chair and read his book alone. This was certainly the most imposing architectural feature within the Centre, whilst the warmth of the constantly stocked real fire created a comfortable space. Ironically, on several occasions the sight of James sitting alone by the fire served to attract the teachers to pull up chairs next to him and engage in conversation. He strongly implied to me that he felt this was an invasion of his privacy, whereas the teachers saw it as part of the positive process of breaking down the barriers between staff and students. This reflects contrasting perspectives on individual pursuits within the context of the residential experience. Often, once the teachers sat down, other students passing by also pulled up chairs and joined in the chatter. As such, the fireplace actually became a significant social focal point most evenings, taking on the function of a community forming open space as suggested by Gereluk (2006). James inadvertently initiated this process, although his motives for using this space were probably the opposite; he identified it as a pleasing setting for a private and personal pursuit.

In a wider context, given the remote rural location of Oaklands, there was no realistic opportunity for students to leave the site other than by minibus, which effectively created a bounded setting. According to Lee & Newby (1983) this is an important factor in potential community building. Beyond the taught sessions,

students were restricted as to the places where they could realistically 'hang out' (dormitories, the lounge, the library, the fireplace, the dining room, the games room, the classrooms, or outside). This was interpreted positively by Dan in his description of a 'magical cocoon', whilst Janet appeared to celebrate the fact that the conditions effectively forced socialising. This was exacerbated by the absence of electronic communication. The physical remoteness, in conjunction with the dense tree cover inhibited mobile phone signals, whilst the absence of the internet (imposed by the school teachers who requested that centre staff did not reveal the necessary computer passwords) prevented social networking beyond face to face contact between those at the field study centre. This actually served to create a closed location, with multiple internal relationships and a strong commonality of experience – all inherent features in traditional interpretations of communities (Lee & Newby, 1983; Stacey, 1960). However, as illustrated in the case of James, these conditions were not viewed positively by all students, nor are they sufficient to guarantee the generation of community feelings. Rather, James shared the perspective of Rapport (1993) in showing an insightful awareness of the artificiality and temporary nature of the experience.

Changing Relationships

The fireplace in the evening served to illustrate one example where the blurring of boundaries between staff and students occurred, via spontaneous social interaction. This issue was viewed by all the accompanying teachers as a significant advantage of residential fieldwork, and served to illustrate the view of Bell (2005) that fieldtrips enable Geography teachers to be seen as human beings by their students. The teachers were also of the opinion that the fieldtrip was an instrumental social learning experience, with the potential to alter individual relationships and group dynamics amongst the students themselves. This view is supported by several research studies of educational visits (Dillon et al, 2005; Fuller et al, 2000; Nundy, 1999; Cook, 2008). The school staff also implied on several occasions during the visit that changing relationships they observed within the group would have lasting impacts back at school. This was not an unrealistic assumption, as demonstrated by the research of Amos & Reiss (2006) in which some fieldtrip friendships continued back at school. Specifically, the teachers interpreted certain actions by James, where he was socialising and

seemingly interacting, as indicative of changes in his relationship within the group. James himself, however, was perhaps merely engaging in temporary coping strategies, to enable him to complete the week. This parallels the research findings of Uzzell (1999) who demonstrated that affective changes occurring during fieldwork were not sustained beyond the fieldtrip. Janet clearly laid blame for the lack of social integration with James himself, in that he worked against her planned interventions.

The agenda of group relationship building (expressed by Janet as an objective to “*gel the group*”) served to potentially conflict with opportunities for individual expression and preferences, whilst reinforcing notions of staff control. This was again evidenced by the private fireside reading of James being transformed into communal socialising. Working alongside this, the contextual conditions all seemed to promote and encourage the communal; with daily routines and procedures, the fixed agenda of fieldwork activity and the desired fieldwork outcomes directed by the teachers and field centre staff. I felt that there was a danger (certainly from the teachers’ perspectives) that feelings of belonging could be assumed, and projected onto the majority of participants by virtue of their compliance. Equally, I was conscious of the extent to which I, as an observer, was directed and pre-occupied with looking for communal activities and relationships such as mutuality, reciprocity and co-operation (Day, 2006). Clearly I observed nearly a full day before I was conscious of any individuals, despite my prior reading about this potential pitfall (Frazer, 1999).

The ‘blending’ of time, whereby work and socialising become blurred is another distinctive residential fieldtrip element that links to both space and changing relationships. Dan clearly perceived this as a contributor to motivation and engagement, claiming the students to be better motivated and more productive. This supports the findings of Amos & Reiss (2006) and Boyle et al (2007), although James disagreed, citing an opposite effect for him.

Common Experiences

Linked to the closed location and the blending of time was the limited range of recreational activities. This was especially pertinent in the evenings when it was

too dark to venture outside and with the only designated recreational space being the games room. Traditional pastimes such as conversation, playing cards, chess/draughts, pool and table tennis became the main recreational activities for many, although James usually preferred to read alone. The nature of the fieldwork and the structure of the days inevitably created a significant amount of common experience for all participants. Moreover, there was also potential for shared feelings (and possible group empathy) through facing shared adversity. However, although James clearly experienced some feelings of adversity shared by others (cold, boredom, hunger), he did not develop a rapport nor seemingly share camaraderie based upon these. Instead this possibly just added to the social adversity he experienced from a lack of friendship.

The backdrop to the whole experience was a rich, natural setting, together with a communal approach to recycling and sustainability. Whilst James displayed an appreciation for the former, he eschewed any reference to the latter. However, group adherence to these principles, introduced by the centre staff and strongly and explicitly supported by the teachers, served as a subliminal common agenda and potentially added to feelings of belonging to a community, by focusing everyone on common ideals or values (Frazer, 1999). Once again, adults were instrumental in creating these, together with the wider rules and boundaries that shaped the whole residential experience. This, when coupled with the very nature of the intense shared living experiences, a commonality of purpose (gathering fieldwork data) and underlying feelings of shared adversity, created potentially powerful factors in developing community feelings (Frankenberg, 1966; Newby, 1985). Furthermore, despite the temporary nature of the residential fieldwork experience, some commentators have indicated that this need not preclude feelings of community (Bauman, 2002, Frazer 1999).

Concluding Discussion

The three themes discussed above shape the structure for the following three analysis chapters. Whilst this could be regarded as a simplistic classification, and there is inevitable overlap between these categories, I feel that this structure assists in analysing and understanding some of the complex experiences on the

residential fieldtrip. Underpinning this is a consideration of the extent to whether and how the residential experience can be equated with feelings of belonging to a temporary community, in the manner described by Bauman (2002) or Frazer (1999). In adopting this structure and approach, I draw upon the analysis that notions of space (Lee & Newby, 1983; Parsons 1951), relationships (Lee & Newby, 1983; Abrams & McCulloch, 1976; Gereluk, 2006) and shared experiences (Young & Willmott, 1957; Frankenberg, 1966) are important characteristics in interpretations of what constitutes a community.

Chapter 9

Perceptions on Space and Territory within a Bounded Setting

In this chapter I explore the use of space within the centre, both managed and spontaneous. I also consider the use of space in community building (Gereluk, 2006) and focus upon perceptions of the closed location and the extent to which this creates a 'bounded setting' (Lee & Newby, 1983). The underlying issue of teacher control is also examined.

The use of Space and Territory for Relaxation

Dormitories were allocated to staff and students immediately upon their arrival to the centre, in accordance with the 'Welcome to Oaklands Good Customer Care Practices' document for centre staff. Bruce (the Lead Tutor at Oaklands) explained that he felt it was important to provide personal space as soon as possible (albeit in the form of a bed, bedside cabinet and wardrobe shelf within a shared dormitory), although this was never raised by the students with me directly, nor discussed within my earshot. After disembarking from the coach, students stood around in the hall and after a very brief informal welcome from Bruce, Dan read out the previously unannounced dormitory list, which he had strategically selected. In withholding the information until this point, and by directly dictating the dormitory arrangements, this represented an overt demonstration of his power. The dormitory as a unit was perceived by Dan as a significant territorial base and potentially an important location for student socialising. The Oaklands rule that students were not allowed in each other's dormitories was clearly emphasized by Emma (the centre tutor) during her welcome talk, and this potentially served to reduce the time spent in dormitories. The allocation by Dan (which adopted a general principle of splitting large groups of friends, but retaining friends in pairs) was designed to assimilate the classes and help meet his objective of bonding the group. The rather spartan and drab interior decoration of the dormitories did not make for an attractive setting, but there was evidence that socialising did occur (e.g. James falling out of the wardrobe and Sue - the Head Housekeeper - finding large numbers of cups in

dormitories during her morning inspections). Moreover, students Hugh and Mel both independently regarded socialising in dormitories as the highlight of their whole trip. Hugh commented: “*We have great fun in the dorms, after the work finishes. That’s the best thing.*” Dormitories were structured such that boys were downstairs and girls upstairs, a Centre arrangement that was designed to facilitate the policing of segregation. Despite this, and the emphasis from Emma, students did not seem overly concerned by these particular rules and appeared to flagrantly disregard them, without any obvious reprisal. The teachers, tutors and students seemed to interpret student dormitories as adult-free zones, in terms of socialising space. The teachers would poke their heads round the door on occasions (for example to do a headcount at the end of the day, or when following up a specific issue with an individual) and Sue would undertake her daily check, to retrieve crockery and report back on general tidiness. I only entered student dormitories on Monday morning, prior to the arrival of the group, feeling that my presence would be an unwelcome intrusion. This does, however, represent a gap in my data collection, since the dormitory provided a unique setting where students could talk uninhibited by the possible presence of their teachers.

After twenty minutes to settle into their dormitories, all students were required to meet back in the lounge for the official welcome and induction. My fieldnotes indicate that this was “a rather low key and informal” talk delivered by Emma, with occasional interruptions from Dan to clarify points, ask questions or reinforce rules. The talk, from my perspective, covered relevant issues, but in a random fashion and with a strong emphasis upon the ‘rules’ (no aerosols, no running, no alcohol, no smoking, no outdoor footwear, meal times, water and tea/coffee provision, dormitory checks, no food in dormitories, fire drill). This approach served to indicate who was creating the bounded space, and on what terms, but interestingly to me also gave an insight into the particular rules which Dan perceived to be important. The rule about dormitories was seemingly not one, and subsequent events served to illustrate the power of Dan in choosing which rules were actively enforced. Dan interrupted the talk to explain his own midnight rule, the time at which all students must be in their dormitories with their lights out. At 11pm he explained a register would be taken in lounge and all

students must be present, unless they wanted to go to bed earlier in which case they had to inform one of the teachers. Emma explained that they were allowed to use the whole grounds during their free time but that, for health and safety reasons, they must be in at least pairs and must inform a teacher. She also outlined some of the main recreational facilities (table tennis tables, table football, pool table) located in the games room, which was accessed by a key signed out from the teachers. Other recreational facilities also required signing out, including the TV/video/DVD player (in a locked unit), piano (locked), football, volleyball, frisbee, putting, rounders/softball and croquet (kept in the teachers staff room). These seemingly tight centre procedures effectively gave the teachers some oversight of who had what and where they might be. Dan was keen to retain the key to the games room and before lunch on Monday stressed to students that he would release it only once he was satisfied that all the necessary work had been completed. On Monday evening, in the teacher's staff room, Dan confided that the size of the group (which was larger than he had previously taken) concerned him in that he did not know where everyone was: *"I do feel slightly uneasy about this."* This perhaps offered an insight into the health and safety responsibilities he felt as trip leader, but as such it was a rare glimpse. Once the welcome talk was completed, Emma led an induction tour of buildings and grounds, encompassing the ground floor communal rooms and parts of the grounds to include the lawns immediately surrounding the Hall, the lake and the walled vegetable garden. Emma saw the large grounds as a major attraction of the centre, in terms of their diverse natural environments, recreational potential and their contribution to health and safety. *"It is a safe environment with lots of outdoor space"*, she explained to the group.

Throughout the week I noticed some regular patterns of use of space during free time. My fieldnotes from 6.30-7.00 pm on Wednesday revealed:

"Decide to go on tour of site immediately after dinner. Students have until 7 pm when they have to meet back in classroom.

Hall: Group of 8 students, sliding along polished parquet floor in socks, trying to do the largest skid. I ask if having fun, they respond "Well wicked!"

Games Room: 12 students – table tennis/table football/sitting around. CD playing in background – I don't recognise song/artist.

Lounge/Library/Classrooms – all empty.

Front lawn – 4 girls sitting huddled together under the large tree. Can't see what they are doing. Decide against heading over.

24/36 students accounted for. Assume rest must be in dormitories, having showers or within grounds beyond immediate vicinity of building.

Teacher Staff Room: Dan & Janet – crouching over laptop, in discussion about data.

Georgina – slouched in soft chair by fireplace.

Snug: Bruce – making a coffee, ready to head off to make final preparations for classroom session. Informs me that it is his turn to stay late – Emma has gone home.”

(Fieldnotes, 11 March 2009)

I feel that a key issue with regard to the recreational use of space pertained to the rules and procedures imposed by the centre and the teachers. Some were justified by both sets of staff in terms of health and safety, some to monitor equipment and others to meet objectives of the visit. In contrast to school, where the boundaries of space and rules are 'given', there was a need to clarify the expectations and limits. Many of these were accepted by students, perhaps being linked to pre-conceived norms from the school environment, such as the need to follow health and safety guidelines and the acceptance of teacher autonomy over student groupings. However there was greater freedom to choose from and use a broad range of recreational spaces, whilst there was also potential for successfully challenging territorial restrictions, as in the case of dormitories.

The use of Space and Territory for Work

After two and a half days of intensive offsite fieldwork covering the topics of heathlands (Monday afternoon), rivers (Tuesday) and tourism/environmental quality (Wednesday), the arrangements for the remaining part of the week were very different. Dan and Janet decided that the students should select one of the three field excursions and write up a detailed mini project. For a half an hour on Thursday morning all students gathered in the classroom, whereupon Dan explained the requirements which involved creating a structured report under general headings. On Wednesday evening Dan had prepared a sheet outlining the

contents for each section, together with a timeframe for completion. This indicated:

*“Title Page/Map: by 10am Thursday
Introduction: by coffee break Thursday
Methodology: by lunch Thursday
Results: by dinner Thursday
Analysis & Conclusions: by 11pm Thursday
Evaluation: by Friday lunchtime
Bibliography: by Friday lunchtime”*
(Source: Handout distributed Thursday 9am by Dan)

Students were instructed to complete individual projects, but they were permitted to work in groups of their choosing in order to share data and discuss the work. They were also told that they could use their time flexibly (breaks could be taken within reason and students could help themselves to drinks) as long as the deadlines for each section were adhered to. I sensed that the students perceived a degree of freedom, whilst the teachers still felt in control by defining the boundaries. Some students chose to work deep into the evening, with the intention of getting ahead of schedule and having a lie-in on Friday morning. Once the projects were finally completed the students were allowed to have free time. They were also given scope to choose where they wished to work and this generated a wide variety of different workspaces. The teachers moved around, providing support and checking upon progress, whilst the arrangements gave me plenty of scope to go and chat with students as they worked. My notes read:

“It feels quite hectic – pupils are scattered all over the place & staff are rushing around trying to keep track of things. Working atmosphere feels informal, although most students appear to be on task.”
(Fieldnotes, Thursday 12 March, 11.55am)

The choice and use of space, given the free remit, revealed several issues. The library was selected and converted into a “den” (their terminology) by group of four male students who re-arranged three tables into a ‘L’ shape immediately behind the door. This created a barrier between anyone entering and themselves in the rest of the room. They sat on tables behind the ‘L’ barrier to do their work and didn’t allow anyone beyond it into the rest of the room. Fergus proudly

announced: *“This side is for us only – when Halls came to check on us and help us out we made him sit on that side”*, pleased that Dan seemingly respected their ‘space’. When I discussed the issue with Dan, he explained that he: *“couldn’t really care less where or how they worked, as long as they put everything back at the end and that they finish all the work. Actually, I cannot believe how hard they are working.”* They took a teapot and mugs from the dining room and made regular journeys back to the kettle to refill. Some soft chairs were re-arranged into ‘U’ shape around the bay window overlooking rear garden, providing a relaxation area for them. They were clearly eager to personalise their chosen workspace, which also became their preferred socialising area too. This represented an example of blending, with a relaxed working atmosphere, in a self styled workspace, focused upon meeting the work tasks and deadlines. Dan and Janet both independently commented to me how very impressed they were by the work and attitude of these students, whom they felt were quite lazy and demotivated at school. The students themselves claimed to be motivated, not extrinsically by the work, but by their own strategy of finishing the work ahead of the schedule imposed by Dan, in order to gain a lie-in on Friday morning, followed by extended free time. Nonetheless the motivation arose from the relaxed working structures permitted by the teachers. Fergus explained: *“We work a lot harder here. They wouldn’t let us go until we had finished the work. So we blaze through everything. We were given responsibility to get it done and when it is completed we are free, so it’s in our own hands.”*

The smaller classroom (which was previously only used in the evenings for the computers in order to undertake data analysis), became quite a popular location for the project write-ups. Four groups of students occupied this room (fourteen students in total), each group congregating around a cluster of tables. This was the usual classroom of Emma (who based herself in this room) and it was also the location where Janet seemed to spend most of her time on Thursday and Friday. Consequently this was a good location for obtaining regular support and input, although I was unsure whether this was a motive for selection, as it was unclear whether the students would have been aware of this at the time. In fact when I asked a couple of students from different groups why they had chosen this room, apathy seemed an equally likely motive. Sophie explained: *“I couldn’t*

be bothered to find anywhere else and this is right next to the other classroom” whilst Paul stated merely: *“I had left my stuff in here from earlier in the week.”* My fieldnotes indicated that the atmosphere in this room was “bustling, lively & crowded but with a purposeful working atmosphere” (Thursday, 3.50 pm). Next door, in the large classroom (which was the regular classroom used for all whole group teaching), a handful of isolated students chose to remain. In total there were eight students; three working individually, one pair of students and one group of three. This was the only room with a capacity large enough to hold the whole group - it was a large room, with five long rows of tables each with twelve seats. It felt very empty, especially as the students were spread out throughout the room. One of the individuals working alone was James, who was using a computer in one corner. The atmosphere was very quiet, if not totally silent. It struck me as the default location, used by those without a strong group allegiance, or without any desire to find or create their own workspace.

The fireplace was the preferred location for one group of five students. Although this represented a more imaginative location, it was not (in my opinion) an ideal workspace. There were no tables at all, but the students had pulled half a dozen low slung soft armchairs around the fire in a semi-circle. Whilst it made for a warm and attractive location to relax, writing was not easy and they had to work with folders perched on their laps. Over time, several students gave up with this, instead opting to lie sprawled across the floor (hard wood) in order to lay out, organise and more readily access their notes. Whilst this was not conducive to working from my perspective (accepting here that I am an office-based middle aged academic) it may have best replicated their preferred working environment at home. However, the entrance hall was also the main thoroughfare in the building, with a resultant stream of deliveries coming through front door and other students passing between dormitories, toilets, work locations and the dining hall in order to fetch drinks. I noted that many students would invariably stop and chatter with members of this group (who would readily oblige), interrupting their progress. I also noted that only rarely were all five group members around, in contrast to the more focused groups in all the other locations. When I enquired as to why they had chosen this location I was told: *“To be next to dining room so we*

can make tea” and *“So we can keep an eye on what is going on from here”*, perhaps reflecting a desire to be at hub of things.

The staff common room was selected by two groups (five students in total). This was introduced by Emma as out-of-bounds to students, but for the write-up Dan was more than happy to allow students to locate themselves in the visiting teachers’ private staff room. One pair of students occupied the soft seating area/coffee table around the fireplace, whilst three students took the desk and computer overlooking the rear garden. They appeared to make themselves at home quite readily, helping themselves to staff tea/coffee facilities, whilst acknowledging the perceived privilege of being able to use nominally staff only facilities. They also chose the location because it was *“quiet”* and *“out of the way.”* This was in clear contrast to school, where the staff room was completely out-of-bounds to students, but in this context the students were able to successfully implement a territorial shift.

The opportunity to work with greater freedom clearly had varying impacts upon different students. For some it afforded a welcome opportunity to solidify existing friendships, in their own specifically crafted locations. Some opted for quiet, previously out-of-bound settings, whilst others specifically selected the most overtly sociable position. Some headed for a location with strong teacher/tutor support and some merely remained in the usual classroom, indifferent to, or unconcerned about the opportunity. This ‘controlled’ freedom enabled them to construct their own boundaries in relation to space and time. These elements also differed from their school, where timings were ruled by the bell and determined by a centrally imposed timetable using clearly demarcated territorial spaces. Having examined the use of space at Oaklands, I now consider views around it being a bounded setting.

Perceptions on the Notion of a Bounded Setting

Notions of a bounded setting are considered inherent within many definitions of a community (Lee & Newby, 1983) and particularly in relation to the traditional occupational agricultural communities of early twentieth century Britain

(Newby, 1985). It is suggested that such circumstances, where external influences were excluded, can no longer exist in modern society (Stacey, 1969). However the unique circumstances of Oaklands, together with some active management by the teachers, did conspire to arguably create a temporary manifestation of something akin to a closed location. At a minimum it created a temporary social grouping in which the students, teachers and centre staff shared a common territorial area as their base of operations, a pre-condition identified by Lee & Newby (1983).

The remote physical situation, in conjunction with the busy schedule of the daytime and the dark evenings effectively meant that the students were ‘trapped’ on site, unless the teachers or tutors took them out in the minibuses. Bruce presented this as an advantage: *“Here you can take people out of their natural environment, and it is a fairly isolated and unique environment, with all the woodland and grounds. They can’t just wander off down the street. There is space for personal and social development in terms of how they interact with each other and for teachers to learn about their pupils.”* The Course Planning Guide for Teachers (written by Bruce and issued to Dan at the induction meeting on 16 January 2009) also made reference to this, with the opening paragraph of page three suggesting that as a result of this Oaklands: *“offers a brief refuge from the hurly burly of modern life.”* Dan agreed with this, citing it as one of the reasons why he chose to take the group to Oaklands. He also added: *“It’s a very safe environment...it’s away. It might be possible to get to the pub in the town but it’s not easy, it’s dark. We occupy them and provide an interest here in the place itself.”* However, when talk of going offsite reached Dan, he was quick to quash it. On Wednesday evening Janet came into the staff room and reported to Dan that she overheard a group of students planning to walk into Wychwood for a takeaway pizza. Dan immediately and flatly responded: *“no, they will not”* and after asking who it was he marched off to confront them. When I subsequently asked Fergus (one of the implicated students) about the incident he explained that they had talked about it but that actually they were: *“too tired really... by the time it gets to 9pm and we’ve finished our work we can’t really be bothered.”* I was unclear whether this was his genuine feeling and that the idea was merely only ever talk. Equally, this could have been a ‘version’ for my benefit, as I do

not know whether they did ever go off site. Alternatively, the talk from Dan (according to Fergus: *"He just said if we were thinking of going off-site for a pizza then forget it"*) may have genuinely dissuaded them and Fergus may not have wished to admit to this. Nonetheless, the incident implied a wish (whether real or theoretical) to escape from the location, although this could be a response to hunger as much as a desire to sample the outside world. Andy was more explicit about his feelings, perceiving the physical isolation in terms of restricting his freedom: *"We miss our freedom. We wanna go out into the town... We don't get enough freedom... we should be allowed to go anywhere at our age."* Sophie agreed: *"You lose your freedom here. You can't leave even if you wanted to"*, whilst Pip reasoned: *"We are contained really in the evenings. No-one goes off, but if people were to go we wouldn't bond as well"* clearly recognising an underlying rationale.

Dan also referred to his personal affection for the setting, as well as his perception of its impacts upon the group: *"It feels like, especially when the Oaklands staff go away (at night), like a country house weekend. It's your own private estate... It has a magic about the place which infects everybody and its worked this trip as well... You come into this cocoon and that is very beneficial for the group, it's good for working and its magic."* The students were more ambivalent about the advantages, some hinting at repression, whilst acknowledging the social impacts. Tess commented: *"...because everyone is hemmed into the same location it is like a community, but it is not a close-knit one"*, whilst Rachel thought: *"As we had the house to ourselves it allowed us to become closer."*

Georgina acknowledged the opportunity to shut out external influences and to concentrate exclusively on the fieldtrip: *"You are in your own little bubble here, just focusing on one thing, just the students and this particular part of the course. It's really good not to have any outside distractions."* Linked to this were notions that time went quicker, without outside influences. Harry suggested: *"Time goes a lot quicker here and you lose track of days"*, whilst Dan expanded: *"Time just whizzes by so quickly. I leave all the news and school behind, I think it's wonderful. Cocooned."* The escape from school life was seen as

advantageous by several students. Hugh commented: *“The best thing is once you go away you are sort of shut off and you don’t really care about anything, so there’s no worries about school, or the next week...”*, whilst Rose also suggested this: *“...it’s more relaxing here... its nice not to know what’s going on back home or anything to do with school.”* Such sentiments were illustrated in practice by Findley (and the teachers), who even forgot about his AS re-sit exam result which was due out on Thursday. Janet only remembered and told him as they were about to board the coach home after lunch on Friday.

Aside from the physical isolation, the students were also without other means of communication with the outside world. The remote location, coupled with the dense tree cover, inhibited mobile phone signals on site, effectively rendering them useless. Offsite, whilst undertaking fieldwork, signals were intermittently available and a few students did use the opportunity to text or call family and friends. However I did not observe any significant enthusiasm or excitement over this and indeed the view of Harry was typical of many: *“I’ve left my phone in my dorm all week. Even when we’ve gone off site and I might have been able to get a signal I haven’t bothered....I like being away from it.”* This view, however, was expressed towards the end of the week (Thursday lunchtime) and I suspect was based upon hindsight from the previous days. Indeed, at the end of the Monday morning induction talk there was a concern and clamour for access to the television, which sat in a padlocked cabinet in one corner of the lounge. Dan responded to a question about how often they can watch it with a soberly expressed *“sometimes.”* In actual fact, the only time I observed television being watched was a Champions League football match on Wednesday evening, when a group of about ten students assembled. On other evenings the TV set was used, but to play fitness videos which generated audience participation. In interviews with students on Thursday I asked them about their most memorable experience of the week. Only one student responded to this question with reference to an ‘external’ event, Arthur citing: *“Liverpool beating Real Madrid 4-0.”*

Bruce was keen to emphasize that there was no ban on mobile phones and that TV and wi-fi access were available at the discretion of the accompanying teachers. He acknowledged that: *“The social side is important for this group in*

terms of bonding the group. This is a focus for Janet and Dan, so the TV is locked away and wi-fi access is banned.” The issue of wi-fi access did appear to be an issue of concern to some students. Despite an announcement from Dan in the induction briefing that there was no internet access, by Tuesday evening there was seemingly significant interest in accessing the internet. At 7.10 pm Findley excitedly came rushing into the games room, claiming he had overheard a conversation between Georgina and Emma in which he had discovered the password for logging onto the laptops (This was of course, different to the internet password, but nonetheless represented a breakthrough in terms of ICT security). He was convinced that the password was ‘sustainability’. A group of six lads stopped their table tennis games and headed over to the classroom in an attempt to log on. I chose to follow. Several students had previously asked me for the passwords, but as I had no need, nor interest, in using the centre machines I had not enquired and therefore was honestly able to respond that I did not know. The students successfully logged onto the computers and immediately tried to access the wi-fi, only to discover (to great disappointment) that the password was different. They then spent around twenty minutes attempting different password combinations, on the theme of sustainability and the environment, but without success. It seemed to become more of a challenge to try and break the password, rather than reflecting a desperate desire to access the wi-fi. I overheard one of them saying: *“This is so annoying...I really want to get this, it’s not that I’m so desperate to use it anymore, but I just want to prove to Miss that I have worked it out.”* When rumours about the incident got back to Janet she found it very amusing and recounted to me: *“They were all really wanting to get on to check their Bebo, MySpace, Facebook, MSN and so on, but once you say no and they get the idea, they just get on without it.”*

Several students whilst missing the internet seemed to actually appreciate the advantages of its unavailability. They implied that if it were available they would be inclined to use it, but this would be to the detriment of the group experience. Pip thought: *“If everyone had the internet then no-one would bother joining in”* whilst Holly confided: *“In the beginning I thought, what am I going to do without the internet? It doesn’t force you, but it means people are more inclined to mix. If everyone had their own thing then they would be geared up on their*

laptops in their room and be unsociable.” Stronger sentiments were expressed by Chloe but she also qualified her criticism: “I feel completely cut off from everyone and as soon as I get back I’m literally going to be on the phone all morning catching up. So it feels kind of lonely and stuff but it’s brought loads of people together because it’s forcing people to talk to each other and it’s a good thing.”

The conditions of physical isolation and the lack of exposure to outside events at home, school or in the wider world, created an introspective environment. This was perceived positively by the teachers, with notions of a magical cocoon. Although such sentiments were shared by some students, others perceived a loss of freedom or a sense of isolation. The virtual isolation, which deprived the students of one of their main social networking media, effectively forced them to engage in face-to-face interaction and group activities. Whilst missing the former, many students could see the benefits, albeit as a temporary experience. Once again the question of teacher power and control was apparent, especially in terms of their management of wi-fi access in order to meet a central objective of the trip. This demonstrated how the teachers, in managing strategies to meet their objectives, were also constructing and facilitating the conditions for a temporary community to develop.

Reflections on my use of Space at Oaklands

I saw my role and the allocation of space to me as significant in the way I was viewed by informants. I undertook a preliminary visit to Oaklands on 12 January 2009, in order to familiarise myself with the procedures and routines on arrival day, with a party of twenty-three Year 6 pupils. On this occasion I arrived at 9 am, an hour before the group arrived and was given a tour of the building and site by Bruce, introduced to all the staff and then we sat and chatted in the centre staff room. I was invited to use this as my base; I left my bag there and returned at various points to write up my fieldnotes and to gather my thoughts. On occasions centre staff popped in and out, and readily engaged in brief banter. I felt very welcome and accepted. Equally the accompanying staff (whom I previously met at their school), were most welcoming towards me in the visiting

teachers' staff room. With St. Catherine's however, on arrival I was shown straight to the teachers' staffroom and was not invited into the centre staffroom until I conducted an interview there with Emma on Thursday. The teachers' staffroom therefore became my allocated workbase for the week. By occupying this space I felt that I would perhaps be identified by the students as close to the teachers, a fact which may have influenced their behaviour in my presence, or affected what they chose to tell me. As I did not perceive it as a 'neutral space', I tried to avoid using that room, instead locating myself in the games room, dining room, or the lounge during my free time. On a few occasions I did feel the need to 'escape' from the intensity of the experience (I found the near constant nature of data collection quite draining), whereupon I retreated to the privacy of my small attic staff dormitory in order to temporarily rest and reflect. My reflective journal records such feelings:

"I feel totally immersed in the experience and hope that I am getting some useful data. It is hard to know, but with such a short space of time I feel under pressure to note down as much as possible. However I am totally exhausted & need to step back to clear my mind. I am loathed to do this in case I miss something, but I need to reflect and analyse so I can move forward productively."
(Reflective Journal, 10 March 2009, 8.30pm)

Concluding Discussion

This chapter addresses issues pertaining to the use of space and perceptions of a bounded setting, linked to an underlying theme of power. Initially I will analyse the notions of space and control in this section using concepts from Foucault (1982, 1991) and Gereluk (2006). Whilst the former analyses "the distribution of individuals in space" (1991, p141) in the context of disciplinary strategies, the latter considers space as a community forming factor. This approach enables me to analyse situations through a different 'lens', thereby offering potentially alternative perspectives on the situations encountered. Specifically, the management of individuals within spaces at Oaklands can be analysed in relation to the notions of power discussed by Foucault (1982). The rules and routines based introduction tended to objectivise individuals, giving them a clear social identity within the centre, subject to the rules and routines associated with their position. Although not in the extreme way of prisoners or mental health patients

that Foucault referred to, some students did perceive themselves as victims of constraint. Foucault (1991) also suggested that the organisation of space helps to clarify the mechanisms of power. He linked this to changing attitudes towards criminality and punishment in the eighteenth century which were:

“an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behaviour, their identity, their activity...” (ibid, p77)

The resulting shift in opinion, from public execution to incarceration, created several disciplinary strategies including the ‘enclosure’ of space, to create a closed setting and the ‘partitioning’ of individuals to prevent group formation and the creation of “collective dispositions” or “dangerous coagulations” (ibid, p143). Foucault (1991) also identified the creation of ‘functional spaces’, with specific sites allocated for particular purposes, and the establishment of a hierarchical network of relations based upon ‘rank’. Such strategies, he argued, were implemented across a range of institutions including schools, barracks and hospitals, although the principles were perhaps most clearly expressed in the Panopticon prison design of Jeremy Bentham.

Quite clearly the centre at Oaklands was not designed, nor even adapted, to facilitate continuous and anonymous power, although it could be suggested that some spatial management occurred to reinforce power relations through the distribution of individuals. This included teacher allocation to private spaces (dormitories) and the control of recreational space (and time), in addition to the restriction of access to virtual space. When the usual routines, procedures and spatial arrangements of the centre were altered (on Thursday and Friday) at the request of the teachers, the centre tutors were distinctly less enthusiastic about these changes. (The next chapter includes a discussion on the relationship between the teachers and tutors.) The tutors actively criticised the approach in terms of student experience, suggesting that the students ought to have greater freedom in their learning. Nonetheless, the approach adopted by the school did allow greater spatial freedom of expression, including some territorial claiming and student use of teacher-only areas, in defiance of the social identity rules of the centre. The students directly involved appreciated this freedom and

responded with increased motivation to the task in hand. Furthermore, these successful challenges perhaps imply an erosion of the disciplinary power relationships based around 'functional spaces' and hierarchical 'rank' (ibid).

Gereluk (2006) suggests that social spaces within schools are potentially significant in community building. She cites the importance of informal networking locations, such as open corridors or common rooms and suggests that "making small adjustments...may create a better sense of community" (ibid, p179). This was manifested at Bishop McGregor School, according to Burgess (1983), where House Blocks were successfully designed and utilised to promote sentiments of community. At Oaklands, the dormitories formed an important basis for informal networking, stretched the rules imposed by the centre and went beyond the social engineering anticipated by Dan. Various communal locations took on a social function, often linked to specific activities, which provided a common focus and harmonised potential community building feelings. For example, the lounge became a location for the collective watching of football (where I observed a crowd mentality at times of goals and critical incidents within the game), and for participating in aerobics to a video. The games room was used regularly and represented the main social focal point for some, whilst the fireplace became a popular setting for those wishing to sit and chat.

The physical and virtual isolation was a characteristic cited by tutors, teachers and students. It was interpreted in different ways, but did serve to effectively create a bounded setting, which for some may have felt like punitive 'enclosure' as:

"the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others
and closed in upon itself." (Foucault, 1991, p141)

The most rudimentary definitions of 'community', according to Lee & Newby (1983), suggest that the term represents a grouping around which a boundary can be drawn and I argue this was largely met by the Oaklands situation and circumstances. I dispute the assertion of Delanty (2003), that notions of communities as closed social systems are now negated by modernization (in response to new forms of communication), albeit in temporary form. The

managed exclusion of virtual networking at Oaklands effectively enforced social activity into a localized and closed context.

The bounded setting was linked to health and safety perceptions; considerations which influenced several decisions and practices throughout the week. The teachers and tutors seemingly adopted a shared perspective on the good provision at Oaklands in this respect. That such considerations impacted upon the experience is perhaps inevitable in the present educational climate. This pre-occupation reinforces the view of Bell (2005), who suggests that health and safety issues are of paramount concern to trip leaders. The perceived threat or fear of litigation in the event of an incident rests heavily with the trip leader (Thomas, 1999) and on occasion Dan acknowledged the pressure of this. It may also account for some of the exertion of his power, together with his appreciation of the tight procedures and physical isolation. Equally, I suspected this was an agenda that the pupils were familiar with from school and I also perceived a resigned acceptance to follow instructions delivered under the 'health and safety umbrella'. As a consequence of this I felt there could potentially have been scope for over-enthusiastic use of the term, with staff justifying decisions under this banner to add weight to their importance. However, I did not feel that this actually occurred, although once again my perspective may be skewed, this time by my previously having been a secondary school Geography teacher. The creeping influence of health and safety was even evident in the new AS Geography examination syllabus the students were following. This included (for the first time) a requirement to understand health and safety issues, including risk assessments, associated with undertaking fieldwork in specific locations. I was not aware that many students found specific health and safety rules and procedures unduly oppressive and from my perspective (having participated in large numbers of educational visits over many years) explicit reference to such issues seemed proportionate and measured. However, whilst the students appeared to accept the boundaries imposed under 'health and safety', I was aware of challenges in respect of other areas. The use of dormitories was a clear example with, I suspect, students quite frequently mingling in each other's rooms. This appeared not to be of huge concern to Dan, nor the other teachers, all of whom seemingly turned a blind eye to such infringements. This represented

another area where the students successfully manipulated internal territorial restrictions and challenged established 'functional sites' and 'ranking' (Foucault, 1991).

This example also provides an effective contrast to school, demonstrating how the setting allowed students and teachers to construct some of their own boundaries, with regard to time and space, in both work and leisure. The approach to project work in particular (on Thursday and Friday) could be regarded as an empowering and enlightening approach on the part of the teachers. This was in contrast to the quite prescriptive and traditional hypothesis-testing approach, based upon quantitative group data, they requested. Nonetheless with the rigid timeline and their intention to move around monitoring progress, the teachers did attempt to retain control (although in reality this proved quite difficult to achieve).

To conclude I argue that the Oaklands setting did provide a clearly delimited boundary, within which internal jostling over specific territory occurred. Frazer (1999) suggests that such a bounded area is important if any group is to experience community, although it is widely agreed that occupying common space is alone insufficient. A detailed analysis of social relationships or attitudes is required by many commentators in their interpretations of community, to demonstrate the 'quality' that occupies the 'entity' (Day 2006). I explore social relationships at Oaklands in the next chapter, in order to consider whether or how they exhibit the characteristics akin to those commonly associated with a 'community'.

Chapter 10

Changing Relationships: Perceptions of Identity, Permanence and Power

In this chapter I explore aspects of the dense network of multiple relationships between the three teachers, thirty-six students and four full-time field study centre staff. I structure the analysis into three categories of relationship; teacher-student, student-student and centre staff-school. Issues around changing identities, the perceived permanence of these changes and power relations are explored in relation to the unique circumstances afforded by the residential experience at Oaklands.

Changing Teacher-Student Relationships and Identities

The Workout

It was 10.30 pm on Wednesday evening. I was in the games room, half listening to and watching a group of six lads playing table tennis, whilst also writing up my field notes from earlier in the day. Alice burst into the room screaming: “...come quick, in the lounge, Halls is doing a fitness video. It’s hilarious!” She was initially greeted with slight disdain: “So what, bugger off – can’t you see we’re busy in here!” However, she persisted: “Come on, come on!” The lads quickly relented and soon, with freshly found enthusiasm at the prospect, ran at high speed to the lounge. By the time I arrived, Dan was on his own in front of the TV set, following the moves to a workout video, whilst behind him a huge crowd of onlookers were cheering, laughing and filming on mobile phones and cameras. Dan, occasionally turning around, was clearly enjoying the attention and beckoned others to join him, several of whom did. After a couple of minutes the routine ended and Dan took the opportunity to fake exhaustion by collapsing into a heap on the floor to wild applause. Laughing and lapping up the adulation, he quickly scrambled to a chair at the side of the room where, together with Janet and Georgina, he proceeded to watch a large group of girls who were working out to further routines. Some were engaging in a serious manner whilst others,

perhaps inspired by Dan, participated in an exaggerated or half-hearted manner. The event served to congregate virtually the whole group (I did not manage to do a headcount – but it felt like everyone was present – although I was conscious that James was not actually there). Some students were even wearing slippers and dressing gowns as they had obviously been tempted out of bed in order to view the spectacle.

I moved over and sat down next to Dan, to ask him about what had happened. He reported that somebody had brought the ‘pump it up video’ from home and that some of the girls were copying the moves. He and Georgina were touring round the rooms in a “*routine sweep*” when they came across it, found it entertaining, so decided to stay and watch for a while. Upon seeing Dan standing and watching, one of the pupils challenged him to join in. “*Believe it or not, actually I quite enjoy that sort of thing*” he explained, before elaborating: “*I have also been training in the martial art Tae Kwando and I am also a Morris Dancer and a Molly Dancer.*” He therefore did not require much persuasion to join in and copied as best as he could. After a while the girls started to drop out (at which point I entered the room) and when Dan turned round: “*absolutely everyone from the trip was at the back of the room photographing and filming, so I thought I’d better carry on!*”

Later in the week, when chatting to Dan on Friday morning, he referred back to the incident reporting: “*It’s done wonders for my reputation*”, implying that this single incident had changed the perception of students towards him. He progressed to emphasize the spontaneous nature of it: “*You can’t plan these things... they happen sometimes. It’s nice when odd things like that happen*”, whilst also acknowledging the potential significance of it upon his relationship with students.

Janet viewed the event both as a source of amusement, but also as a critical incident¹⁸ which spontaneously served to bring together the whole group: “*For a teacher nearing retirement to be doing keep fit stuff set to dance music... it was*

¹⁸ I also viewed this as a critical incident in terms of my analysis of relationships.

hilarious... and the way it went around the place, all the kids came out from all corners – even getting out of bed...The word went round so quickly, we had the whole group cheering him... I mean that sort of thing is lovely. It'll be talked about forever." I suggest that the incident was potentially a 'key episode', in the analysis of Mackenzie & White (1982), in that it met their description of a colourful event on the visit that was likely to remain in the memory. More than this though, in experiencing spontaneous and almost universal whole group excitement and participation, I argue that it could be regarded as a 'community moment'. This adopts the interpretation of Frazer (1999) who argues that community sentiments may be "euphoric and fleeting" (1999, p83). Furthermore, it also offered the students (and even possibly the other accompanying teachers) a shared insight into a different identity of Dan, through an unexpected experience that certainly made an impression upon many of them. On Thursday and Friday, whilst chatting with students, it was the most regularly cited event of the whole week. For example, Harry reflected the sentiments of many by referring to it as the "...most memorable thing on the whole trip." Others picked up on some of the feelings Dan had expressed to me. "Ask him about it, he is very proud. We got it on our phones" Holly told me, although I never actually heard Dan discussing it with any students himself.

Some made reference to suggested impacts of the incident beyond the trip, in terms of their relationship with Dan. Whilst he implied that his reputation may have been enhanced by the incident, some students viewed it as an opportunity to make fun of him in future, but in a light-hearted rather than a malicious way. Rose explained: "*It will be funny back at school 'cos we can always bring up the pump it up dancing. It will be funny – we can make fun of him.*" The incident was significant in that it served to alter perceptions about a seemingly aging and potentially boring Geography teacher, to someone with a personality and a sense of fun. As such it represents an example of fieldwork enabling teachers to be viewed as 'human beings', a point highlighted by Bell (2005). Some students cited it as indicative of a 'different side' to their teachers, which the residential experience afforded. This was captured by Chloe in her observation: "...*they're all mental here*", but she qualified this with an awareness of the temporary nature of the fieldtrip, hence her expectation that: "...*they'll be boring again at school.*"

I have chosen this example to illustrate different perceptions on changes to the relationship between Dan and his students based upon a single event. It demonstrates the power of a spontaneous incident in convening the group for a few moments of shared fun but also raises questions about the permanence of changes exhibited on the fieldtrip. Moreover, as a single incident it emphasizes the potential throughout the course of the whole week for multiple and complex relationships between the students, teachers and centre staff to develop. It also demonstrates the dense network of multiple relationships that Frazer (1999) regards as one of the required crucial elements in a community. (Other elements include a bounded area, a quality of identification and shared norms, values or interests, but she qualifies that not all need necessarily be present). Calderwood (2000) emphasizes, in particular, the significance of informal social relationships in developing community feelings within a school and the following section explores these on the trip.

Informal Teacher-Student Interactions: Identities and Boundaries

The week at Oaklands provided a breadth of opportunities and scope for interaction between teachers and students, significantly beyond those usually afforded by the typical school environment. For example, there were several hours of ‘down time’ each day when students were effectively at leisure (immediately before and after mealtimes and in the evening once the work was completed). These were spent, for instance, sitting around the fireplace in the evening, hanging out in the games room playing table tennis, working out to a fitness DVD or playing outdoor games (frisbee, football, rounders, manhunt) in the grounds. Any students not wishing to socialise with teachers could readily retreat to their own dormitories, where they would be ensured privacy. The teachers rarely spent such time in their own staff room (nor in their own dormitories) but preferred to have a presence around the centre, joining in with students where possible. As such, they effectively treated any group of students they encountered as fair game for joining in with their activity, or for engaging in social chatter. Hugh acknowledged this and seemed to view it positively, rather than intrusively as James did: *“They’ll sit around and join in if everyone’s talking...we have a good talk with them around the fire. They act more friendly*

than they do in school... they are more like people than just teachers.” There was not, according to Dan, a desire to closely monitor what was going on, nor a pre-determined strategy to interact with students, but it just “...*felt like the sociable thing to do.*” Georgina concurred adding: “*I want to be part of the action*”, although Janet felt a heavy sense of responsibility to try and keep a handle on where the students were and what they were doing. Dan was initially concerned about this too (mainly due to the size of the group) but after the first night he felt more relaxed and able to trust the students: “*They are all a sensible bunch really.*”

All mealtimes afforded some semi-structured non-teaching time, when staff strategically dispersed themselves and migrated between tables, in order to get to know different students better across the week. In addition, there were other informal opportunities for social chatter, such as in the minibus between site visits, walking to and from the minibus and at sampling sites during off-task moments. On such occasions, I observed that staff and students appeared eager and willing to engage in conversations on broad-ranging issues, usually unrelated to the Geography curriculum.

Furthermore, the Oaklands residential experience allowed opportunity for ‘blending’, whereby the clearly defined time boundaries between working and leisure were blurred. This links with the spatial freedom identified in the previous chapter and represents a further contrast with the usual regime back at St. Catherine’s. Some students opted to work deep into the evenings (9-10 pm), happy to work less intensively, but with freedom to wander, make drinks and chatter as they pleased. Teachers were on hand, ready to support with advice and encouragement about the work, but also to participate in off task discussions, which served to create a much more relaxed working atmosphere. Dillon et al (2005) suggest that the very nature of practical fieldwork fosters a less formal working environment than class-based teaching and learning, with greater opportunities for sharing a joke.

The most formal classroom sessions held at the centre (briefing sessions prior to departing on fieldwork in the morning and recap sessions upon returning to the

centre when the evening follow up task was explained) were invariably led by the centre tutors, whilst the teachers acted in a supporting role. These circumstances facilitated opportunities for more informal interaction and altered perceptions and attitudes between teachers and their students, a point raised by Bruce: *“It gives teachers the opportunity to see pupils in a different light and vice versa.”*

The teachers seemed more willing to discuss matters pertaining to their own personal lives. For instance on Monday lunchtime (the first mealtime of the week) Georgina brought up the subject of her wedding, recounting that she and her husband spontaneously eloped to Scotland to get married without informing anyone. She reported that her Mum in particular was *“not too pleased”*, but then joked that her Dad was actually relieved because she had saved him a lot of money! The students were eager to question her further; about her dress, whether her husband was dark or blond and on details about her honeymoon. Georgina was most forthcoming with details delivered in a light-hearted tone.

The teachers were also happy to share jokes with students and on occasions this was self mocking. For instance Georgina joked with students in the entrance hall on arrival over the huge size of her suitcase which reflected her vanity and passion for numerous changes of footwear. Sometimes they made fun of each other in front of the students; on Wednesday afternoon Janet joked that the only reason Georgina wanted to lead the tourism study on Wednesday was so she could sneak off to *“pig out on chips”*, much to the amusement of the assembled students. Teachers were also not reticent in poking fun at their students, even on politically incorrect sexist terms. During the heathland study (on Monday afternoon) Bruce demonstrated the use of a soil auger to obtain soil samples. Dan interrupted his serious explanation with the comment: *“It’s a soil auger, not a soil ogre”*, to which Holly sarcastically retorted: *“Ha, ha, very funny Sir!!”* Bruce had by now lost the attention of the group, who were enjoying the banter. Dan continued: *“We are not going to have any problems with the girlie groups are we!!”*, to which Lucy responded, to widespread group laughter: *“How sexist is that Sir!”* Janet was not reticent to round upon the male students on Tuesday afternoon when she noticed that not a single one of them had gone in the river at

the deepest sampling site. They seemingly preferred to take on data recording responsibilities on the river bank, whilst letting the girls undertake all the measuring in the river. *“The boys are full of talk, but when it comes to it they’re rubbish”* she yelled, to widespread applause from the girls and jeers from the boys. Thus all three teachers felt able to make jokes on potentially sensitive ground and in so doing challenged the student’s perception of their identity as ‘teachers’.

The teachers were also willing to engage in jokes initiated by the students. One evening, Fergus was dared by the other lads in his dormitory to sneak down to the fridge, in just his boxer shorts, after the official lights out at 12 pm. Harry explained: *“We stitched him up something wicked. We were hoping the teachers would still be about and that Fergus would run into them.”* I was unclear as to whether the students involved in planning the prank could anticipate the likely reaction of the teachers. I sensed that they felt these could range between embarrassment, annoyance or amusement. Irrespective of this, they derived amusement from the fact he was creeping through the hall scantily clad, whilst the unpredictability of whether anyone would see him, and if it were the teachers how they would react, added to their enjoyment. Coincidentally, Janet was in the dining room, making herself a cup of tea when the door slowly opened and he peered in the room, with his mates behind watching from half way up the stairs. Upon seeing Janet he turned and fled back up the stairs, following the others who also charged upstairs whilst roaring with laughter. Janet too, shared the funny side of this, shouting up after them: *“Come on in, you’re not afraid of me are you?!!”*

In addition to a tendency to demonstrate a greater sense of fun, the teachers also appeared to me to be more tolerant of behaviours that I felt would certainly be frowned upon within school. Once again, I suggest this contributed to the changed teacher’s identity, as perceived by the students. During the induction tour of the grounds, a group of lads decided to trip each other up. This quickly escalated to them rugby-tackling each other, often in an exaggerated fashion, before making attempts to pull each other’s trousers down. The teachers were walking behind this fracas but opted not even to comment, instead adopting the

behavioural management strategy of tactical ignoring, advocated by Rogers (1991). In classroom settings at Oaklands, under the more relaxed regime compared to school, pupils hugging each other and giving piggy back rides were also permitted to continue without comment. Students noticed this and appreciated it, as Rose remarked: *“The teachers are a lot more relaxed here, a lot more chilled...they treat us more like adults rather than picking us up on little things. They are easier to get on with.”* The perception that they appear ‘less like teachers’, I would argue, is a consequence of the amount of time spent together, the broader range of contexts in which they socialised, the more informal working conditions and the more relaxed demeanour of the teachers afforded by the particular setting. This latter point included being able to wear their own clothes, the lack of competing pressures on their time (when compared to a typical school day where they may be photocopying, marking, preparing and teaching five different classes, doing break duty, attending staff briefing, etc) and a desire to enjoy the experience themselves. These factors all contributed to a changed identity that was manifested in the altered discourse with their students.

However, each individual teacher did appear to have their own personal, and rather different, boundaries of acceptability. As the youngest and most easy-going individual, it was not unsurprising that Georgina was seen as the most approachable teacher on the trip by many students. Equally though, she was the one whose relaxed manner was least remarkable when compared with her behaviour in school. Georgina, nonetheless, exhibited acceptability boundaries. During the Tuesday evening meal she was engaging in plenty of lively banter with the students at her table. This included jokes about portion size, leading to a competition between Paul and herself over who could eat the most seconds. Conversations then veered towards a discussion of other teachers at the school, including their habits and expressions. Examples included the way a particular teacher slouched in his chair with his legs spread wide apart and another teacher *“totally losing it”* in the classroom. Georgina was initially a willing and eager participant, appearing unperturbed by my presence, about frankly sharing her own opinions, or laughing at jokes about her colleagues. The exception however, was when reference was made about the swearing of a teacher, whereupon Georgina (despite obviously hearing) ignored the comments and immediately

withdrew from the conversation. I felt that in her mind a line of acceptability had been crossed. She later confided that: “...*everyone likes a good gossip*” but admitted: “*I feel a bit bad talking about other members of staff, but nothing that was said was too awful. I’m sure they talk about me behind my back too.*”

Georgina explained that she found it interesting to hear about pupil perceptions of other teachers, to see if they fitted with her own. I was tempted to ask about her opinion of the swearing teacher, but felt that the way she ignored it at the time and then failed to acknowledge it in her analysis of the situation, would have potentially made my questioning appear intrusive. I did not wish to risk even slight damage to my relationship with Georgina by appearing to be overly interrogative on this issue, quite early in the week. I was still building relationships, testing boundaries and mindful of the importance of establishing amicable and productive field relations.

Janet was, from my perspective, the most formal and work-focused teacher, a point not lost on some of the students. She displayed the least fluid interpretation of the blending of work and social time when compared with Dan and Georgina, maintaining a stronger work focus and demanding a more consistent work ethic. This gave her the most consistent teacher identity, closely representing her school persona the majority of the time. She established this tone upon her arrival at Oaklands late on Monday afternoon, having attended a funeral that morning. She immediately headed for the classroom and was very proactive in engaging with the students about what they had done, what they needed to do and why they were doing it. My fieldnotes emphasized that all her exchanges were extremely work-focused throughout the two hour duration of the session. Similarly I noted on Tuesday evening that during the rivers write-up, she spotted a group of lads looking at photographs from the day rather than analysing data. She promptly intervened, in a serious tone, to make reference to the importance of the task in relation to potential exam questions, re-iterating the point she had made consistently about this during the day. Fergus shared my interpretation of Janet: “*Miss Wilkins really changes once we stop working, you can then joke with her, but she is always quite strict when there is still any work to be done.*”

Nonetheless on occasions she was happy to switch role and act more like a student during down-time. After Wednesday dinner a mobile phone was found on one of dining tables and this was handed to Janet, who was supervising students clearing crockery from her table. She decided to look at the call records to establish whom it might belong to, announcing the previously made recent calls to “*Dad*”, “*Virgin*” and “*Alex*”. Initially she adopted the teacher role, assuming the associated power and responsibility to establish the rightful owner of the lost property. With the help of the students around it was quickly identified as belonging to Tom, whereupon Janet continued to look through the phone contents: “*Adam, Arse – who’s Arse?*” Holly chipped in: “*I think we’ve established that it is Tom’s*” to laughter, as Janet continued to pry. Chloe then suggested she look at his messages and photos, which Janet did, showing them around to great hilarity.

Dan initially appeared to adopt a strict and school-like demeanour. Upon entering the lounge, where the students had assembled for the welcome talk, many were slouched with their feet upon the coffee tables. Dan instantly expressed his displeasure at this and insisted upon full attention and sitting up straight, prior to the entrance of Emma, the centre tutor. However, subsequent events on the Monday (rugby tackles on the walk which he blatantly ignored and his sexist jokes with a group of girls on the heath) illustrated that he quickly banished any such tendencies for strictness. He attributed his subsequently more relaxed attitude to the “*magic of Oaklands*” (which, if so, clearly worked quickly!) although I suspect there was also possibly an element of wanting to make a good initial impression with the Oaklands staff and/or myself. Dan felt that he had good relationships with many of the students before the fieldtrip, suggesting that quite a few of them had chosen to study the subject at A level because they got on well with him. His supposition here supports the research of Adey & Biddulph (2001) who identified the relationship with their teacher as a key determinant in year 9 pupils selecting Geography at GCSE level. For Dan, getting to know some students a bit better was important so he strategically positioned himself at mealtimes with students he did not know as well.

The effect of the passage of time on relationships was explicitly commented upon by Janet in relation to the attitude of the students: *“They’ve gone from the beginning of the week being very sheepish talking and gossiping in front of us to exchanging gossip about each other, about teachers and about things going on in their lives...they’re comfortable with us, there’s not that wariness.”* This reflected the changing nature of the relationship between the students and teachers, influenced by perceptions about changing identities and boundaries of acceptability.

Different Perspectives on the Impacts of Changing Relationships

The overriding interpretation from the students in relation to the changing relationship with their teachers was that it contributed to their enjoyment of the trip. They regularly remarked about incidents involving their teachers as being ‘fun’. This sentiment coincides with the findings of Cook (2008) in her study of perceptions of fieldwork, where ‘fun’ was the overriding experience felt by the 338 pupils she sampled. In the context of the Oaklands trip, improved social relations with their teachers were perhaps viewed as a short term manifestation of being around and living together for an intense period of time. The ‘fun’ was partly attributable to the more relaxed manner of the teachers, seeing them in unfamiliar contexts and being able to get to know them better. Findley commented: *“We stop seeing them as teachers and their individual personality comes out more because of the amount of time we spend around them.”*

However, he thought that this was linked to the unique environment and circumstances on the trip and did not feel that it would carry back to school. Another view was that the teachers treated them more like adults and that this would have an impact upon relationships back at school. Tom suggested: *“I consider my teachers as more human because they treated us like adults. I now have more respect for them”* whilst Fergus went further by explaining that he is now likely to try harder back at school: *“I care more what they think of me, so I will try to do the work well.”* However, the closer interactions were not viewed positively by all. Arthur felt that he had gained new insights into what the teachers really thought of him stating: *“I feel like I have been patronised by my teachers. I have also realised that they think I am stupid. I think it is very rude of them.”* This was in response to, what he perceived as, constant checking up and

correcting him whilst he was working, although the teachers reported to me that they did not regard him as one of the weaker students. His view links with the repression and lack of privacy expressed by James.

The teachers, whilst deriving enjoyment from more informal relationships on the trip, also appeared to view them as significant in potentially having lasting impacts back at school. They viewed the experience as having the potential to facilitate changes in the attainment, attitude and behaviour of their students. Echoing the research of Amos & Reiss (2006), in which they suggest that residential fieldwork has long term impacts on pupil motivation, Bruce suggested that: *“coming away, learning outdoors... it really helps them when they go back into the classroom at school...it tends to make them more motivated.”* In an interview with Georgina at the end of the week, her fondest memories were: *“...the camaraderie really, the meal times. I really enjoyed sitting down and sort of chatting to everyone and getting to know the students at a different level and hearing their stories and opinions on school life and the things that you don’t maybe notice as a teacher.”* Janet also emphasized the opportunity to get to know students as individuals and for the students to get to know her better: *“I get a real buzz out of the kids realizing that I’m human... with 2 large classes it is hard to get to know them as individuals, but after a residential you’ve got that rapport with them, you’ve had a bit of a joke, you’ve had time to sit and chat and find out what jobs they do and what their families are like.”* Georgina highlighted a concrete work-related impact based upon her experience on the trip and assumed that it would continue back at school: *“They see us in a different light, we see them in a different light and it just improves working relationships. They are more happy to speak to us if they don’t understand anything.”* In an interview at the school on 3 April, Janet referred specifically to a group of four lads, feeling that there had been lasting impacts of the trip upon their attitude. She felt that the trip had: *“definitely opened the channels of communication to the point where they’re now being very pro-active and telling me about stuff, asking for help and following my advice ...it’s a changed relationship completely.”* She progressed to refer to the students generally as: *“more malleable in a classroom setting”*, perhaps reflecting the newfound respect some students had talked of.

Overall, perceptions on the impact of changes were variable; some students recognised the unique and temporary circumstances of the fieldtrip, whilst others felt there would be longer term impacts. The teachers believed in the potential of the experience to make changes, both to their knowledge and understanding of individual students and to their broader teaching of the classes. However, in both these teacher interpretations, there is possibly an underlying agenda of strengthening teacher power when back at school.

Changing Student – Student Relationships

The potential of residential visits to influence aspects of the social relationships between students has been demonstrated in a range of studies (Amos & Reiss, 2006; Cook, 2008; Dillon et al, 2005; Farnham & Mutrie, 1997; Nundy, 1999; Purdie et al, 2002; Rosenthal & Lee, 2009). This was echoed in general terms by Bruce, from his perspective as an experienced field study centre tutor:

“Residential trips are mostly about personal and social skills and developing those as opposed to ticking boxes in terms of the curriculum.”

Before the visit Dan had explained to me that he was taking two classes that did not really know each other. They both contained students from five different previous schools (including St. Catherine’s). He also emphasized that compared to previous years it was a much larger group and he was unsure, because of all these factors, what the group dynamics would be like. He recalled that one year a group of ex-students came back to Oaklands during the fieldtrip to meet up because they had enjoyed it so much: *“The really interesting thing is they’re now still in touch with each other even though they’re in places like Colorado and New England. They all seem to know what each other is doing... and quite a lot of them are doing things related to Geography.”* Dan appeared to attribute this, at least in part, to the success of a previous trip, confirming his belief in the potential of fieldtrips to have lasting impacts. He identified a main aim of this visit was to *“gel the groups”*, but in the hope that this would: *“improve motivation for their AS and we’ll then have better take up from AS to A2.”* In a conversation with Emma on Monday, she explained that both Dan and Janet had impressed upon her their strong desire to *“bond the group”*, as she described it.

“The Lads”

I will consider one particular group of students, before examining relationships within the wider party. This clearly identifiable grouping comprised four male students (Fergus, Hugh, Tom and Harry) who were friends prior to the trip and were often given a group identity by their teachers (*“the group of lads”*). They first came to my attention on the induction tour when they were conspicuously boisterous, whilst they were also distinctive as a group by spending most of their free time in the games room together. Janet highlighted her potential concerns, in terms of a perceived collective attitude: *“As a group they drag each other down or push each other up, behaviourally and academically.”* She progressed to identify one potential leader: *“Harry is the motivational force, if only we could get him on side the others would follow.”* Despite referring collectively to the behaviour and ability of the four students, I had previously been given their predicted grades which ranged considerably (Fergus E, Hugh C, Harry B and Tom E¹⁹).

Dan also regarded Harry as the leader and confided that at the Year 12 parents’ evening the week before fieldtrip he had taken the opportunity to talk to him about the trip. In an indirect attempt at social engineering, Dan had spoken to him, praising his work improvements and emphasizing how impressively he had matured into a natural leader. Dan then asked him, in front of his parents, to use these qualities to lead his group of mates. Dan was clearly pleased with this strategy, noting on Friday of the trip that: *“...he agreed with me in front of his parents and he did just that.”* Dan thought the lads could easily *“go off the rails”* but felt that they developed a group work ethic, especially for the completion of their projects. He linked this to the blending of social enjoyment and work, whereby they were able to take breaks, make drinks whenever they liked and work at their own pace.

Dan had allocated them all to the same dormitory, but had brought in a couple of other boys to make up the number to six. The relatively small number of males (eleven) on the trip had restricted his manoeuvrability with male dormitory

¹⁹ This was part of the contextual information that the school provided to me prior to the fieldtrip in the form of class lists.

allocations. His primary concern with the male students was to create a suitable, supportive dormitory environment for James, and Dan felt that placing him with any of the four 'lads' would not have provided this. The 'lads' automatically gravitated towards each other for working groups, although on a couple of the days Dan did make changes to split all four of them up, giving them some girls to work with "*just to dilute the lads together culture.*" During free time, whilst remaining together, they readily mixed with a wider number of students (both male and female) and teachers, enthusiastically joining in a wide range of activities. At meal times they often arrived late whereupon they had to split up in order to fill vacant places scattered across a number of tables. Once again I noticed a willingness to integrate and socialise with the vast majority of students on the trip. I did note from my observations however that they avoided verbal interaction with two male students, James and Andy, and at least two female students (Abbie and Fran). These four were, according to Janet (and backed up by my observations) the more reserved students and most likely to be: "*either intimidated, or annoyed by their antics.*" Whilst this suggested a mutual desire not to interact, it also demonstrated acceptance of, and a tolerance towards, others. The 'lads' were very happy to hurl insults about each other, and occasionally to mimic other students for a laugh. However I did not witness any derogatory comments being made by them about these four students on the trip. It may be, of course, that my presence did influence them in this respect and that out of my earshot they behaved differently.

The 'lads' themselves unanimously talked of their enjoyment on the trip, in terms of the social experience, and expressed a desire to "*rekindle it, we'll reminisce.*" They all referred to social interactions as a group, with Hugh signalling his highlight of the trip as: "*hanging out in the dorms with your mates.*" Tom, whilst appreciating socialising with his friends in the group, also referred to the wider group: "*It was a real social thing for us... you don't really get such intense interaction just in lessons at school, so you sort of get to know everyone much better.*" Thus the intensity of the experience clearly enhanced the bonding amongst these existing friends and with the wider group. I will now consider student relationships at the whole group level.

Perceptions upon Relationships amongst the Whole Group

One feature of inter-student relationships related to feelings of belonging to, and the development of, a whole group; a manifestation of the ‘gelling’ Dan hoped for. He seemed to imply that this was achieved, with his perceptions on inclusivity and tolerance and by references to the collective ‘group’: *“We look after each other and there isn’t anyone left out in the cold, I don’t think. It’s that tolerance as well, they’re one of us. Maybe you don’t like someone but they’re part of the group and there is no ill feeling.”* It is perhaps worth noting that tolerance is a specific quality Frankenberg (1966) regards as characteristic of a community. Janet felt that, whilst everyone did not get on with each other all the time, there was an overall co-operation and a consideration for others. Tom expressed stronger sentiments: *“It feels like you are part of a massive family”*, whilst Holly cited the communal living arrangements as being instrumental in generating such feelings: *“Everyone is together – living and eating together and it feels like one close-knit group.”* The intensity of time around each other was emphasized by Jamie: *“...we spend so much time together, sharing meals and so on”* whilst Rose drew an analogy with the fictional wizards boarding school Hogwarts (Rowling, 1997). Paul cited the common purpose of the work and sensed belonging to a group peer support network: *“Everyone has joined together as a group. Everyone has pulled together. We all ask each other for help.”* This view was also shared by Chloe: *“Everyone works together trying to achieve similar goals. Free time is also spent together, giving more time to integrate and socialise and have fun.”* Such comments implied some improvements to group cohesion, a characteristic also identified by Farnham & Mutrie (1997) in their study of residential outdoor education with SEN students. Moreover, the notions of inclusivity, tolerance, common purpose and a sense of belonging are features attributed to community feelings based around shared living (Frankenberg, 1966) and social co-operation (Day, 2006).

Emma, as a centre tutor, felt that she had the perspective of an ‘external observer’ (in that she was not from the school, nor did she have any prior knowledge about the group) and believed that as the week progressed the group dynamic changed. She noted on Thursday: *“There is a whole group rapport, they are comfortable around each other...things were much quieter on Monday.”*

However some students suggested it was unrealistic to project a group identity to

all: *“In the evenings we all get together and we organise something, like manhunt, it’s a whole group activity...there are a few tiny little cliques who don’t join in, but there is a large central group.”* This supports the view of Day (2006) who suggests that whilst people will identify with those around them, there are limits as to how far people empathise or feel obligated. Equally, as an identifiable whole, I feel it is perhaps easy to project universally assumed generalisations upon ‘the group’, when in reality this may mask significant internal differences.

The Formation of New Friendships at Oaklands

Several students specifically commented upon the opportunity to meet new people, invoking this as a positive outcome of the trip. Some of these confided that they did not even know the names of all their own classmates prior to the trip. Rose explained: *“I have really enjoyed working with different people, people I’ve never really spoken to before and I’ve formed new friendships...some people in the class I didn’t know before...we always used to sit on the same tables (at school)...but I didn’t even know everyone’s name but I definitely do now.”* Holly, reflecting back on the week commented: *“It has been a good laugh and it is good to bond with people and mix with new people.”* She suggested that this occurred primarily during free time in the evenings when: *“...we come together, have a cup of tea, a bit of a feast and a chat in someone’s dormitory.”* Evenings were the main opportunity for socialising with peers and on various occasions I observed outside games in the dark (e.g. manhunt), watching football in the lounge, chatter around the fireplace, work/social blending in classrooms, games room activities and ‘hanging out’ in dormitories. During a minibus ride on Wednesday, five students behind me took the opportunity to share photos on each other’s phones/cameras of their bedrooms, pets, car, parents and holidays, thereby gaining new insights into each other’s lives. Paul also appreciated the benefit of meeting new people, but linked this opportunity to the working environment: *“We all help each other out with the work, I will ask people I would not have asked before the trip”*, a point which also suggested improvements in student co-operation. This is a particular outcome of residential fieldwork noted by the research of Nundy (1999). Fran attributed this to the *“informal atmosphere”* although Janet was clear to attribute improved social cohesion

amongst students to the unique environment of Oaklands: *“There is something very special about Oaklands. We tend to bring groups and they don’t know each other, they don’t want to work, but then it all suddenly comes together. We’ve never seen this happen anywhere else.”* This appears to support Dan’s assertion that there is a sense of ‘magic’ about the place. Students did hint at the unique opportunities afforded by the residential experience, if not the specific Oaklands centre itself. Paul noted: *“I’m going to miss the evenings – sort of being with loads of friends because we all go back to our own homes and you never socialise with that many people at once usually.”* Findley hinted at a degree of compulsion in making social relationships, before qualifying this to express strong enjoyment of the experience – a sentiment also shared by others: *“You are forced to socialise here. At school you sit in your usual tables for lessons and then disappear. I’m going to miss the atmosphere with everyone being together and messing around.”* Such sentiments represent an example of the ‘new social situations’ which arise during fieldwork, as highlighted by Rosenthal & Lee (2009) in their study of a residential fieldtrip. However, it is perhaps important to acknowledge that such social situations were not necessarily random, nor spontaneous; they were often actively managed by the teachers in charge. I consider this issue in the next section.

The Role of Social Engineering in Influencing Relationships

Some students were overt in acknowledging the role of their teachers in social engineering, although I did not observe explicit discussion between teachers and students about this. Chloe explained: *“Because of the fact that classes have been mixed in dormitories I have met new great people who I wouldn’t normally talk to.”* Dan had strategically allocated students to dormitories, to facilitate the ‘gelling’ he sought. He ensured a mix of classes and previous schools in each of the six student dormitories, but explained that he was careful: *“not to split particular friendships.”* I never heard students complaining about their dormitory allocation, perhaps accepting teacher-allocated dormitories as the norm on residential school trips. The large classroom was big enough to enable all the students to be taught together, whilst they were allowed to choose freely which minibus they went in when travelling to sites. Allocating students to work groups also largely encompassed free choice, but the size of groups varied from

day to day, according to the fieldwork tasks. Teachers intervened to move individuals on occasion, when group sizes were uneven. At mealtimes students sat where they wished, with teachers spreading themselves around on different tables. On Thursday and Friday, when students were writing up a mini-project, they were given total freedom to choose with whom they worked. This resulted in various size combinations, ranging from individuals working alone up to the largest single group of six students.

Georgina suggested that the teachers acted more as facilitators, since the living and working conditions effectively enforced numerous social interactions: *“It is quite nice them being forced into a situation where they have to interact with each other...we try to mix it up a bit, but some of it just happens naturally as well.”* Acknowledging this necessity to interact, some students hinted at expediency in making the best of the circumstances, implying that superficial impressions of harmony may mask underlying tensions. For example Sophie commented: *“We’re all in such close contact, we’ve just gotta get along, keep smiling and make the best...it is only for a few days...if anyone is annoying you there is enough space to keep out of their way...we’ve all got our own little bedrooms so we can get away if need be.”* Andy distinguished between socialising and working in groups: *“Some people are only friends here because they have to be – ‘coz we have to live together for a week”*, whilst noting that: *“...teamwork is required for data collection so it forces us to work together in groups and teams.”* He implied that both were imposed (for different reasons) and thus gave a different insight to the findings of Cook (2008) who suggested that group work was a teacher-led activity, whereas teamwork was a spontaneous, student-led and seemingly more ‘natural’ form of socialising.

For some students, the week afforded an opportunity to spend extended time with existing friends. This was often viewed positively (in enhancing the friendship) by the friends themselves, although others, including the teachers, expressed negative sentiments over this, implying a retrenched attitude or a lack of effort to integrate. Tellingly, it also represented failure on the part of the teachers to socially engineer a fully gelled group, hence perhaps their stance. On Tuesday evening Dan disappointedly told Georgina in the staff room about a student

whom he had not seen mixing with anyone other than her existing friends. Another student actually found the intensity of the experience detrimental to her existing relationship explaining: *“I think my friendships have slightly decreased as being together so much gives more time to get on each other’s nerves”*, a finding shared by Amos & Reiss (2006).

Overall, I feel that the teachers perceived social engineering within their remit of managing the trip and evaluated their success or failure of this, alongside their more overtly desired outcomes.

Lasting Impacts of the Oaklands Trip on Social Relations

Even during the trip, both students and teachers were making comments that implied there would be lasting social impacts beyond the visit itself. Dan identified one particular student, Andy, whom he believed had *“really come out of himself”* and gained in confidence during the week. Dan cited his Peter Kay impression to a group of students in the lounge on Thursday evening as an example of this. Paul predicted a change in the attitude of his whole class: *“We all help each other out with the work, I will ask people I would not have asked before the trip...and once we get back to sixth form I think the whole class will be more united.”* Socially he also admitted: *“I’ll probably try and keep in contact with a few more people and be a bit more friendly with them in school.”* Others referred to the private jokes and shared experiences which provided a commonality of experience that students not attending the fieldtrip would not have. Tom elaborated: *“It’s weird though because we have this same experience, so you sort of got something in common with everyone in the class.”*

When I interviewed the teachers back at school, three weeks after the trip, they were all able to cite specific examples of changes. Dan clearly felt that his aim of gelling the group had been successful: *“It is quite clear that there is now that bond.”* He also reported that one of language teachers, Miss Cotrell, came to him to say how much pupils had seemed to enjoy the trip. Tess had allegedly told her that it was: *“the best week of her life.”* Prior to the trip Janet found that her larger class used to chatter in small groups, but afterwards they chattered as a whole group - often across tables - which was actually more disruptive in lessons.

However, she also noted that they were much better at listening, which had made progress in lessons much quicker. It is interesting to note that her analysis was very much from the perspective of teacher control in the classroom. She commented that they were more fluid where they sat in lessons, with increased migration between tables. Janet also found that they were much happier working in teacher-directed groups, without the previous hesitation to talk to each other. Finally, Janet cited changes in individuals: *“the quiet ones – Abbie and Fran were not quite so quiet any more, and were more confident working in groups”*, whilst Andy (identified by Jeff on the trip) was now: *“academically and socially flying.”* Thus it would seem that short term lasting impacts included improved confidence in individuals, an outcome also suggested by Dillon et al (2005). However the improvements in groupwork appear to contradict the study of Purdie et al (2002) who suggest that the formation of specific friendships on residential trips can be counter-productive to co-operative teamwork outside of the friendship groups.

In relation to such lasting impacts, it is important to note that my study only provides a very limited perspective on this issue. I conducted follow-up interviews with the three teachers and a selection of students, three weeks after the fieldtrip. Thus the trip was still fairly fresh in the minds of participants, and any impacts may not have had the chance to diminish over time. Georgina had found that her class did still sit in their same seats, but that they were more chatty when coming in. She also recalled an incident when Andy was sitting alone (as his usual neighbour was away) so Sophie came over and sat next to him to keep him company: *“I thought this was really nice... relationships have improved in the class and there is a much more positive atmosphere.”* Georgina had also experienced students reflecting back positively with her. For example, Holly and Chloe had asked her: *“Can’t we just move to Oaklands and live there?!”* Bruce, the Lead Tutor, said that he occasionally heard such comments second-hand from teachers, but explained that from his perspective it was difficult to witness significant social changes since by the time he got to know the names of students it was nearly time for them to leave. In the next section, I will consider the field centre staff in more detail, focusing upon their relationship with the students and teachers.

Relationships between the Centre Staff and the School

Understandings of Roles and Responsibilities

The two centre tutors saw themselves, and were viewed by the teachers and students, as the primary deliverers of content throughout the week. This was also consistent with the Oaklands Course Planning Guide, written by Bruce, which clearly outlined that fieldwork activities, associated planning and follow-up would be led by the tutors, guided by the requirements and needs of the school. Specifically the first page stated: “*Visiting group leaders retain their ‘duty of care’, remaining responsible for the discipline, care and welfare of course participants. This cannot be delegated to Centre Staff. To that end a responsible member of visiting staff must be on site with students at all times.*” Despite this, the centre retained the ultimate sanction: “*...to exclude, with no refund, any student who does not behave in a reasonable fashion in respect of personal, group, community or safety considerations*” (Course Planning Guide, page 8). I was particularly interested to note the use of the word ‘community’ here – the only such reference within the Guide. I am uncertain as to the exact meaning of the term in this context; whether it refers to the ‘Oaklands community’ – on the assumption that community sentiments are fostered by all visiting groups, or to the local community where fieldwork may take place.

There had been the customary pre-visit briefing meeting, where details of the programme were planned and discussed. This meeting was held on 16 January 2009, although I was not aware of this, nor was I invited to attend. However Bruce did provide me with a copy of his handwritten notes from this meeting when I arrived on the Monday (see Appendix B), together with workbooks for the week, compiled by the centre tutors (see Appendix A for an example of the rivers sheets). Whilst acknowledging the significance of residential fieldwork socially, both centre tutors expressed difficulty (and mild frustration) at their own failure to get to know the students. They perceived their primary role as providing curricular input, despite admitting to a lack of familiarity with the particular examination specifications used by the school and their belief that the primary outcomes were social rather than academic. However the operation of the centre and the organisation of the week did not readily facilitate the

assimilation of centre tutors with the students. Typically only one tutor addressed the group, whilst the other was in the office finalising resources, or in the store room preparing, cleaning or checking equipment. On Monday, Emma formally welcomed the group and conducted the induction tour, before Bruce introduced the fieldwork task. He explained that they rotated the input throughout the week, to give each other a break, to share out the equipment preparation/checks and to play to their own topic strengths. The teachers attended all taught sessions and tended to chip on with comments and clarification as they felt it necessary. Sometimes this was largely without interruption, but in other sessions, such as the Rivers briefing session on Tuesday morning, Janet interrupted Emma on numerous occasions. From my perspective Janet was clearly the acknowledged expert on the examination, but there were perhaps power dynamics occurring over other river-related knowledge. Emma was clearly more familiar with the study sites and fieldwork techniques, but Janet with her assertive manner seemed keen to portray herself as the leading authority on river techniques and processes to her students.

Both tutors drove a centre minibus each and attended all sessions in the field where they led demonstrations, assisted individuals, set geographical boundaries and time limits. However their interaction with students was usually addressing groups, and whilst they gave individual guidance and support on various occasions, I noted that this lacked a personal rapport. Bruce and Emma both acknowledged this too (even admitting to not really knowing any student names) whilst citing various reasons for this including: “*the shortage of time*” (Bruce) and the: “*big group, a busy week and not being as focused upon that*” (Emma). Neither socialised with the group at mealtimes; both lived off-site (eighteen miles away in the nearest city) and so they ate breakfast and dinner at home. Centre policy meant they were not provided with any meals, so they also had to bring their own packed lunch. This was a cause of some resentment, particularly from Emma, as she interpreted it in terms of having a lower status than the teachers. The two tutors tended to eat lunch together in the ‘snug’ and used this as an opportunity to catch up on events from the morning.

I noticed fairly clearly understood distinctions in the respective roles of the teachers and tutors. However, several events during the week revealed differences of opinion, which ultimately served to illustrate the balance of power within this relationship. These are considered in the next section.

Perspectives on Fieldwork Content and Approaches

Despite the supposedly pre-agreed programme content at the earlier meeting, I observed that Dan and Janet were regular and persistent in requesting alterations to the programme. As soon as Dan arrived at the centre, after greeting Emma, he immediately initiated a discussion with her over the programme content. Bruce appeared from the dining hall and also joined in the conversation. Dan appeared to be insisting that he wanted to use square quadrats and to do chi-square testing in the afternoon. As this conversation was taking place, students were arriving and carrying their suitcases into the Hall, where they begin to congregate awaiting further instructions. This created a hectic and haphazard initial impression, as both tutors were clearly diverted from their usual routine of welcoming the students. One outcome of that discussion was that the first classroom session with the students was re-scheduled to take place before lunch on Monday morning, not a usual arrangement according to Emma. She confirmed that Dan was very keen to get them working as soon as possible. Bruce was clearly stretched by this decision and spent much of the remainder of the morning dashing around, making final preparations for this earlier-than-scheduled session. Bruce explained to me later that afternoon that he was happy to be accommodating, although there was no record of this requirement on the pre-visit notes.

Different perspectives on the timing and expectations of the afternoon fieldwork materialised in the field on Monday. We arrived at the Heath at 2.10 pm, disembarked from the minibuses and walked a short distance to an area of expansive, open heathland. Bruce gathered all the students around him, explaining how to identify the different species of plants with the assistance of an identification chart. Students were then sent off in groups to collect data at twenty randomly selected sample sites. By 3.10 pm, after an hour in the field, it was starting to get appreciably colder. My fieldnotes indicated that I was feeling

the cold myself, whilst the fieldwork appeared repetitive and monotonous for the students, but despite this they were purposefully engaged, to my slight surprise. Georgina concurred with me, stressing that the pupils were doing really well, whilst suggesting that she would like a cup of tea herself. By 3.40 pm a group of girls had finished gathering data from twenty sampling sites within their study area and they huddled together by the first aid box, in hopeful anticipation of an imminent departure. Dan, leading by example, was still heavily involved in data collection, engaged by and enthusiastic about the task. I summarised that he was either oblivious to the cold students, or that he was tactically modelling enthusiasm. When Dan came over to the girls he insisted that they get up and collect data from an additional twenty sites. This was greeted with groans and moans of incredulity, but after issuing the instruction he wandered off and the students eventually got up and carried on as instructed. At 4.15 pm all the students were still collecting data, but some were displaying signs of frustration. Bruce, Emma and Georgina all independently stated to me that they were keen to tie up the activity, but Dan evidently expected all students to collect data from forty sample sites and he was not willing to sanction departure until he was satisfied that it was all done. Bruce commented to me as we stood around waiting: *“I feel they have done twenty points and that they have got the technique. They are getting cold and bored, but it is no, we must get another twenty, we must get the data.”* An element of dissatisfaction came across, together with a resigned acceptance to defer to the wishes of Dan as trip leader. The following day Emma explained her view: *“Yesterday the pupils were fed up and we were more than ready to go, but Dan was still keen to keep going. I try to fit in with the attitude of the teachers.”*

Perhaps more fundamentally, I also noticed a difference of opinion over the particular fieldwork techniques employed on the heath. Bruce suggested before departure that the students collect data from ten sites in three different areas of heath, but Dan wanted two areas with twenty sites in each. Bruce explained: *“I disagree with him, but that is what he wanted. They are the customers, so that is what they did.”* He also explained that he had suggested to Dan that they use square quadrats because of the height of the vegetation, but Dan again was insistent that they use point quadrats. Bruce commented: *“I don’t think that point*

quadrats worked well on that heathland – twenty sampling points in dense heathland is not very easy. Last year the heath was lower so point quadrats worked well.” It felt slightly uncomfortable that I appeared to be in the middle of several disagreements during the first afternoon of fieldwork and I was anxious that this might continue, or even escalate, as the week progressed. On the other hand, it was apparent that I had gained the confidence of Bruce, who was not reticent in giving me his frank opinion on proceedings. However, on subsequent days there were less frequent or open disagreements. It could be that this was an initial power struggle to exert authority and once Dan had established this he felt less need to actively contradict suggestions made by the centre staff. Alternatively, it may have been that Bruce had resigned himself to heeding the requests of Dan, aware of the futility of challenging them.

I was conscious of some tweaks to the rivers programme on Tuesday, with Janet changing her mind over the sampling sites she wished to visit. However, as the week progressed, I began to observe a difference of opinion over broader fieldwork pedagogy between the teachers and tutors. This links to the classification of Job (1999), outlined in Chapter 6. Bruce felt that the whole approach of the school was very structured. His declared preference was to: “...let the pupils try things themselves and find out for themselves”, suggesting there was too much emphasis on: “*spoon feeding with the school staff.*” He seemed to favour ‘discovery fieldwork’ in the typology of Job (1999)²⁰, as opposed to the more traditional ‘field research’ he felt was favoured by the school. He also mentioned that the school were keen on a very tight structure to everything and implied that the emphasis of the trip was flawed: “*We have spent an awful lot of time on data collection which I think is quite odd as they don’t really need the data, so I think a lot of time has been wasted just collating data. Yesterday evening (Wednesday) they spent hours putting data onto the computer and I felt it was a waste of an evening. To me it is about learning the skills, trying out the techniques and finding some of the limitations and problems. I don’t think they have got that quite right. I think there is too much emphasis on the quality of data and I think we could spend more time practising the*

²⁰ See Chapter 6.

techniques and helping them understand them.” This perhaps reflected a different emphasis from that of the teachers, which he progressed to acknowledge by commenting that they do get very good exam results. This maybe suggested that he saw Oaklands fulfilling a broader educational role, linked to the acquisition and refinement of life skills, whilst the school were perhaps more pre-occupied with jumping through hoops to prepare their students to pass examinations: *“They know their own specifications, which we do not and ultimately they are responsible for their own results.”* (Incidentally the actual AS exam results for this group were *“very disappointing”* according to Janet. She attributed this to the fact it was a new examination specification which the department was still adjusting to. She also felt that the exam paper itself was *“strange”* and suggested that some of the students were *“poorly motivated.”* Therefore the teachers were not as knowledgeable about the forthcoming exam as Bruce perhaps had thought).

On a couple of occasions, the teachers commented negatively to their students about the resources supplied and created by the centre. On Tuesday morning, whilst assisting a group of students with river measurements, Janet voiced her opinion: *“It’s a really badly set-up sheet.”* Later that day, back at the centre, Emma suggested using the Geopacks software which was installed on the computers in the classroom. Janet, upon using the software, commented to a group of pupils as they were working *“that’s rubbish”* whilst suggesting that they should make hand drawn cross sections instead. Emma, overhearing this conversation, clarified that they used it because it was compatible with the electronic flow meters. These incidents revealed to me that Janet did not seem to have a particularly strong sense of professional loyalty towards the field study centre.

In several respects the centre tutors and teachers appeared to have different agendas. The Oaklands tutors believed that social outcomes were the most important feature of residential fieldwork, despite their own lack of involvement in this. The teachers expressed multiple objectives; to prepare for a specific exam, to gel the group, to improve student motivation and to enhance uptake at A2. The centre tutors undertook the primary role in delivering the agreed

curricular content (despite holding misgivings about the approach), although they had no accountability for the ultimate outcomes, in terms of examination results. They made frequent alterations to the programme at the request of the teachers, despite disagreeing over fieldwork techniques and pedagogy. This willingness demonstrated the nature of the power relationship between the centre and the school, which I explore further in the next section.

Reflections on the Nature of the Relationship

On Thursday and Friday I interviewed all the teachers and centre staff individually and obtained some candid feelings about the nature of their working relationship. Bruce suggested: *“We know they like coming here because we both know how the other operates. They like coming here because we are flexible and basically we will do what they want. At the end of the day they are their students and it is up to them what they want to do.”* He then progressed to identify fundamental differences over the structure and approach to the week: *“They have decided that the best way to teach techniques and limitations is to do a project, so they are spending one and a half days doing that. I don’t think I would do it that way...I personally think it is an awfully long time to spend on writing up something that is then just going to be discarded.”* Whilst hinting that this was highly atypical, he acknowledged that all the teachers were: *“very committed to their students and getting the best out of them”* before suggesting that his own expertise and experience was slightly under-utilised: *“I just sometimes feel that we know what works and what doesn’t. There needs to be ideally a better balance between what they want to do and what we want to do, or at least what works well. I feel at times this week it would have run more smoothly had we had a proper lead in what we were doing.”* At times Bruce talked with a degree of frustration, especially in relation to the planning meeting, where he assumed that the programme had been finalised only for it to be constantly refined throughout Monday and Tuesday. He noted that tweaks to the programme and schedule throughout the day were really *“...quite unusual - typically it is all decided at the planning meeting and then it’s all done.”* On the other hand this could be regarded as a slightly inflexible approach by the centre, since programme refinement based upon the reflection of events perhaps ought to be a feature of a high quality fieldwork experience. Equally the fact that few of the schools

visiting Oaklands requested this could reflect the pro-active nature of the St. Catherine's staff. Bruce explained that the centre offered a list of options, but tried to tailor what was done to the individual school, agreed in advance at the planning meeting. He explained that the rivers day was quite different from what they would normally do and this was because of changes the school wanted on the day. Emma specifically commented that she had anticipated running a "typical rivers day" on Tuesday and suggested diplomatically that: "*between the planning meeting and coming perhaps the staff decided that they actually wanted to concentrate on collecting data.*" This implied a change of mind, rather than refinement based upon evaluation. Bruce concluded, with a degree of resigned acceptance, "*we are working together*", whilst noting that the school was the "*customer.*" This was also evident in the Course Planning Guide issued to the school, which included on the first page a welcome with the aim: "*We hope that all of our visitors will leave us with happy memories as satisfied customers.*" Bruce therefore accepted that, whilst accompanying teachers usually let centre staff take the lead and have "*total freedom*" with the teaching, the St. Catherine's staff were different.

Dan was keen to emphasize that this was the first time they had run this particular field course and he viewed it as an innovative programme: "*I mean, I'm a great believer in trying to set something new up, like this, rather than repeat something mindlessly year after year.*" He also seemed to imply that Oaklands were less sensitive to the needs of his group: "*They do it all generic – generic data collection sheets for all year groups.*" He also stressed that they only deal with data collection and therefore lack an appreciation of student outcomes: "*They never see what we go through – they don't ever follow up the data.*" Based upon this he also argued: "*They tend to assume the kids all understand, but they don't.*" In reference to the planning meeting he suggested that changes he had requested were not implemented and cited the work booklets for the week: "*It isn't quite what we want, one size never does fit all. I have found that, even though we asked for changes at the planning meeting, I was not surprised they have a set way of doing it and it turns out the same.*" The planning meeting notes that I saw did refer to a specific request by the school: "*Task sheet for each investigation in the booklet. Liaise with Janet/Dan on the*

format for this” (see Appendix B), but from my observations this had not happened. However, Dan felt that he could discuss any changes he required with the centre tutors: *“I think this is a partnership – we know them from the past – and that is why we come here.”*

Thus events in the week and the analysis above imply that the school staff, and in particular Dan as trip leader, held ultimate power over how the programme was structured and implemented. He was regarded and saw himself as ‘the customer’, being able to negotiate, or even dictate, to obtain his desired ‘product’. However, both Janet and Dan implied that changes or requests were in order to meet the new examination specifications that they were following. They were attempting to maximise the chances of their students in the forthcoming skills exam. In this respect the students could actually be viewed as the customers. Janet also referred to the financial cost of the trip, which suggested that she felt accountable to the parents of the students, whom may be regarded as ‘customers’ in that they were paying for the trip. She queried: *“How do you get the skills – enough of a range of skills – to make it worthwhile the parents paying £230 and make it easy for ourselves so we are not having to follow it up with extra techniques at school afterwards?”*

Despite the slightly distant relationship between the students and the Oaklands tutors (which was partly caused by the centre policy on meals), I noticed a warmer and more personal relationship between the students and Sue and Dave (the Head Housekeeper and Chef). Both interpreted their roles in terms of facilitating relationships with visiting groups. Sue explained: *“We try to make them feel welcome...this is their home for a week innit?”* Unlike the tutors, they were highly visible at mealtimes with Sue serving and clearing tables, whilst Dave came out from the kitchen to chat with the students as they ate, at least once every day. He readily struck up conversations with students but, despite commenting on misgivings over portion size and taste in his absence, the students seemed unwilling to tell Dave directly. *“He is a nice guy, doing his best to feed us all... I don’t want to hurt his feelings”* explained Findley. Sue felt it was a *“small group, so you see everyone a lot”* and despite her officious demeanour she too engaged in banter. *“You can have a laugh with the older*

groups like these – it makes the job more fun”, implying that it was as much for her own benefit. Dave also referred to a degree of self interest, contrasting the kitchen at Oaklands to the hotel trade where: “*you never get to see a customer.*”

The customer-client relationship effectively gave Dan power over the arrangements on the fieldtrip. He in turn was mindful of other considerations, in particular examination results and parents, to whom he ultimately felt accountable. The school felt that the Oaklands tutors lacked an appreciation of student outcomes and displayed a lack of attention to their specific requests. The need to religiously serve the ‘customer’ was a source of frustration to Bruce and, to a lesser extent, Emma. They were charged with content delivery, but without autonomy over what and how it was delivered, despite their obvious academic expertise and fieldwork experience.

Concluding Discussion

In the previous chapter I suggested that the particular and unique circumstances of the week at Oaklands could be interpreted as a bounded setting. In this chapter I consider the changing social relationships within that bounded setting to develop my argument that temporary manifestations of community evolved during the residential fieldtrip.

This chapter captures a sample of the multiple relationships that developed between the stable set of individuals at Oaklands throughout the particular week. I argue that the events and structure of the week provided evidence to meet the fundamental assertion of Gereluk that: “The basic human function of interacting with others forms the basis of community” (2006, p59). A key feature of the relationships at Oaklands pertained to their informal nature, in particular when compared with corresponding relationships back at school. Similar elements of informality were actually identified by Burgess (1983) within the Newsom Department (a remedial non-examination group) at Bishop McGregor School, in stark contrast to the procedures in the main school. Examples included flexibility over working time, overlooking incidents of poor behaviour, impromptu chats, gossiping with students and allowing students to make drinks. Such informal

relationships are described as key determinants in developing a sense of community within an educational context according to Calderwood (2000). In terms of specific characteristics, I suggest that the community sentiments of inclusivity and tolerance suggested by Frankenberg (1966) are evidenced, together with social co-operation, a community characteristic cited by Day (2006). Day also argues that in a community, human beings tend to feel a sense of identification with those around them and this is apparent through the developing and evolving dynamics of the week. In particular, the incident of Dan's dancing led to the spontaneous assemblage of virtually the whole group, providing a focal point for much subsequent discussion. It also became a highlight of the week for many and resulted in some permanently re-defined relationships. This also, arguably, represented an example of a "fleeting and euphoric community moment" (Frazer, 1999, p83).

Within the broader analysis of community relationships, I suggest that three concepts shape my discussion; identity, power and permanence. The Oaklands setting was the backdrop to the teachers adopting different and multiple identities. These identities shifted throughout the week and for each teacher there was evidence of personal boundaries in relation to their usual classroom persona. For Janet, she clearly delimited work and socialising, by not embracing the characteristics of blending that Dan and Georgina seemed to enjoy. Georgina felt uncomfortable gossiping about colleagues, in particular over the issue of them swearing. For many students, Dan exhibited the largest deviation in behaviour from his usual teacher identity, appearing far more 'relaxed' and 'human' than they had anticipated. He nonetheless retained his 'teacher-like' focus on the work (for example through his insistence upon relentless data collection) although this was largely directed at the centre staff, as he became the demanding 'customer' negotiating hard to obtain his required 'product.' He was also strategically astute in persistently and actively pursuing his multiple objectives for the trip.

The teachers exerted power over both their students and the tutors. This was done overtly with the Oaklands staff, as they were clearly framed as 'customers', but with the students some less explicit social engineering and hidden agendas (such as improving A2 take-up) were operational. This adds a dimension to the notion

of multiple relationships, perhaps implying the existence of ‘multiple hierarchies’. Dan, as the trip leader and Head of Department, was widely perceived as the most powerful individual on the visit. However his actions were influenced by his feelings of accountability to parents and the school, both in terms of delivering good examination results and providing value for money. Janet, with her assertive presence and frank manner, played a powerful role in shaping the experience, particularly on days when topics that she teaches were covered (such as the rivers day). Bruce and Emma (the centre tutors) attempted to exert their authority, drawing upon their knowledge and experience of what usually worked well, but often they were over-ruled. Nonetheless, they held deeper misgivings over the whole approach to the fieldtrip that was requested by the school, implying that it was a rather traditional and prescriptive approach. I felt that by adopting this stance they seemed to be vying for the educational higher ground, despite losing the daily ‘battle’ over programme detail. This was seemingly contradicted, however, by their reluctance to deviate from arrangements made at the planning meeting and their inflexible adherence to the use of generic worksheets.

The adults (both teachers and tutors) perceived the social benefits of residential fieldwork to be manifested beyond the actual visit, but there were mixed views from the students about the likelihood of this. Nonetheless, it did provide an intense social experience in which perceptions, if not subsequent actions, were altered. A contested point was the extent to which relationships were shaped by the Oaklands experience in particular, as opposed to any residential field study centre. Dan and Janet referred to the Oaklands ‘magic’ on various occasions, hinting at the combined influences of the remote setting, the grandeur of the building and the freedom to develop socially without centre staff involvement (due to their absence at mealtimes and being left totally alone and in charge of the site in the evenings). Dan referred to it as like having his own country house estate, which appealed to his romantic notions, whilst perhaps also demonstrating his desire for power and authority.

Having identified a bounded setting in which dynamic, multiple and hierarchical relationships developed, I plan to examine in the next chapter the extent to which feelings of common purpose were held by participants.

Chapter 11

Perceptions on Common Aims and Experiences

This chapter considers the extent to which feelings of commonality, solidarity and a sense of belonging were felt, as these elements are often regarded as defining community sentiments (Lee & Newby, 1983; Day 2006). Perspectives on the issues of work, control and notions of shared adversity are also specifically addressed.

The structure and organisation of the week resulted in large amounts of time when the whole group were engaged in common activity. This included communal mealtimes, taught sessions and fieldwork activities. The latter two were strongly influenced by the agenda of the teachers, concentrating upon data collection and the accuracy of fieldwork data. These aims were regularly and overtly referred to by the teachers throughout the week. In addition, the approach of the centre staff was to model good practice in relation to environmental sustainability, thereby strategically presenting a ‘subliminal backdrop’ underpinned by this common focus. I also observed elements of shared adversity by some of the group, a potentially important feature in the development of solidarity (Day, 2006; Williams, 1985). In this chapter I consider examples of shared routines, goals and adversity, examining the perceived impacts of these and the extent to which such feelings were accepted and embraced. Against this context I then consider the scope for, and examples of, individual values and expression.

Daily Routines and Working Hours at Oaklands

The centre routines were outlined by Emma during her Monday morning induction talk. Mealtimes were 8 am for breakfast and 5.30 pm for dinner when students were asked to wait outside the dining hall until a handbell was rung by Sue. The students then entered and sat down, whereupon Sue brought plates and food platters to each table. Students served and cleared away themselves (following procedures on a written sheet). This included instructions to wait until

everyone had finished, to wipe down the table and to sort the waste. Lunchtime arrangements were variable, dependent upon the fieldwork activity of the day.

Working hours were from 9 am – 5 pm (with breaks) in the daytime, with evening classroom sessions from 6.30 pm onwards. The amount of time spent upon work was not lost on several of the students who explicitly commented to me about this. In an interview back at school after the fieldtrip Tom reflected: *“We worked loads, 9-12 hours a day...for the whole week! You are immersed in the work of Geography.”* During the trip Findley expressed a similar view: *“You get a lot more done here as you are working late and ‘cos you’re not working hour slots it’s easier to get down to work. In a lesson (at school) it can take half an hour to get into the work.”* Holly agreed about the time spent, but questioned her own motivation because of the informal atmosphere: *“I get more work done here because of the amount of time we spend on it. You just get an hour at a time at school. But here it is more relaxed so I perhaps don’t feel like working as much.”* Joe described it as an *“intense working experience”*, but qualified this by suggesting that the: *“...work is made enjoyable as you are out and about and working in groups.”* Paul jokingly noted: *“I’ve never thought about so much geography in my life.”* Surprisingly to me, I did not encounter many negative feelings about the time spent on work, other than those expressed by James (see Chapter 8). This suggests a different perception of work compared to that in school and links to the blending of time and space (see Chapters 8 and 9) and the altered teacher-student relationships discussed in chapter 10.

Dan suggested that the students actually enjoyed the overall experience, in spite of the fact that they were working long hours. In an interview on 3 April back at St. Catherine’s he reported: *“I’m so pleased, we’ve just heard it being described as a holiday...but the fact is they worked so hard and they can regard it as a holiday, is to me a success, because the work was fun. That is a real success of the trip, they didn’t see it as work, yet they did loads of it.”* Once again he attributed this largely to the ‘magic of Oaklands’, although I suggest that it was actually a combination of several factors including the practical nature of the fieldwork, the camaraderie of group work, the blending of work/social time, the

relaxed atmosphere and a willingness to attribute fun to circumstances (see later in this Chapter). Indeed, I found that the over-riding reaction of the students to the week was that it had been 'fun'. Overall, thirty-five of the thirty-six students reported to me (during conversations on Thursday and Friday) that they had enjoyed the visit, the one exception being James. This parallels the findings of Amos and Reiss (2006) who sampled 423 pupils from 10 schools about fieldwork experiences and found that 97% enjoyed their visits. When I followed up with questions about what particularly they had enjoyed, socialising and personal relationships accounted for the majority of the responses (sixteen students referred to these factors). Twelve students actually mentioned some aspect of the work, including three students whom made reference to the practical nature of outdoor fieldwork, and five whom specifically referred to the river study.

During the first teaching session (brought forward to before lunch on Monday at the request of Dan) Bruce outlined the generic 'investigation format' for all fieldwork topics during the week (heaths, rivers and tourism). This common approach involved hypothesis formation, selection of data collection techniques, recording of data, data presentation, data analysis, conclusions and an evaluation. In essence this follows the 'field research' approach, in the classification proposed by Job (1999) and outlined in Chapter 6. Job presents this as a traditional approach and, as such, it seemingly contradicts with the self-confessed preference for student-centred 'discovery fieldwork' expressed by Bruce. Nonetheless, despite his ideals, I suspect he was constrained by the pragmatic requirement of offering a menu of field courses, from which schools select. Offering totally open-ended 'discovery fieldwork' would potentially necessitate bespoke materials and approaches for each visiting group which would place an impossible burden upon the tutors, in terms of preparation. Bruce explained to the students that the centre would provide a workbook each day, comprising learning intentions, location maps and data collection sheets, before talking through the resource book for Monday afternoon in detail. (Appendix A shows the workbook sheets for the Rivers fieldwork on Tuesday.)

Thus a simple and consistent pattern to the daily schedule and an approach to fieldwork tasks were established early on, and this remained until Dan introduced the individual projects on Thursday, described in Chapter 9.

The Significance of Data Collection

During the induction walk on Monday morning, I asked Dan what his main priority was for the week. I had anticipated a response along the lines of ‘gelling the group’, since he had previously emphasized the importance of this to me in an earlier conversation that morning. However, he immediately replied that it was to improve student understanding of fieldwork techniques for their exams. This highlighted the issue of changing aims and objectives throughout the week, depending upon the time and circumstance. On Monday lunchtime I overheard him stressing the importance of this to Georgina. This desire stemmed from the fact that the students were to sit a new ‘Geographical Skills’ examination in June 2009, instead of writing and submitting coursework as in previous years. Janet explained that without past papers, or mark schemes to scrutinise, they were: “*slightly in the dark as what to expect.*” Consequently the emphasis they placed rested upon their own assumptions of the knowledge and understanding that would be required, based upon their scrutiny of the examination board syllabus (AQA GCE AS & A level Specification: Geography, 2009). This document emphasizes that: “*candidates will need to take part in investigative work in the field*” (2009, p9) without specifying any exact fieldwork techniques. The school interpreted this by covering vegetation and soil sampling on heathlands, river surveys and a tourism study which included land use mapping, questionnaires, environmental quality indices and photography. For each topic and technique, the following aspects were covered; health and safety considerations, relevant data collection processes and their limitations, recording, collating and presentation of the data and data analysis. This enabled a common approach to each topic. A consideration of site specific details, health and safety issues and data collection techniques were covered in a classroom based session prior to departure, led by one of the centre tutors. Preliminary data collation was started upon returning to the centre prior to dinner, with further data collation, data

presentation and data analysis occurring in the evening. These evening sessions were led by the teachers.

The teachers made regular (but speculative) reference to likely exam questions throughout the week. For instance, Janet repeatedly interrupted Emma during the rivers day on Tuesday to emphasize that: “*Data collection has to be consistent and repeatable.*” The data collected by students was entirely quantitative and the approaches were positivistic. This contrasted significantly with my personal data collection method and approach and, despite my attempted explanations, I was fairly certain that the teachers, tutors or students did not really understand what I was actually doing.

Several students referred to specific data collection skills that they felt they had learnt on the fieldtrip. These included soil sampling (Andy), pH testing (Tess), setting out transects (Sophie), land use surveys (Catherine and Findley) and river techniques (Fran, Abbie, Rachel, Kate). In addition, two analytical techniques for data analysis were also mentioned; random number tables (by Sophie, Louise, Pip and Ruth) and statistical tests (by Alice and Chloe). Other students were less specific about particular skills, Lily citing for example: “*I learnt about investigative techniques, about new techniques for the exam and about data collection.*” Paul gave the broadest perspective on the issue: “*We are all here for our own benefit and we’ve got to do what we’ve got to do.*” Only one student, Joe, felt that he did not learn any new techniques as a result of the fieldtrip. He also claimed that he had not made new friendships, altered existing friendships, or changed relationships with his teachers. Nonetheless he was still positive about the trip overall, stating simply that he had enjoyed it.

The students seemed to accept the interpretations of their teachers as to what they needed to study and what was important for them to know for their forthcoming examinations and this perhaps relates to their cultural expectations from school. For the teachers, improved student knowledge and understanding of data collection techniques was a primary success criteria, whilst for the majority of students it was perhaps more about having fun.

Subliminal Agendas: Environmental Sustainability and Healthy Eating

A feature of the welcome and induction morning that came across to me (on both of the induction talks and tours I experienced) was an emphasis upon the eco-agenda. Although these inductions were pitched to cater for the differing ages of students (Year 6 and Year 12) they addressed the same issues. The grounds tour, whilst making specific curricular links relevant to the forthcoming week, was broadened by Emma to make reference to nutrient levels within the lake, soil erosion issues along the footpaths and woodland management strategies to manage diversity. The tours concluded in the walled garden, which was devoted to growing fruit and vegetables, where she stated: *“I guarantee that every day you will eat something from the walled garden.”* This linked to a strong healthy eating agenda, whereby the centre was eager to stress its use of fresh, local produce to make healthy and wholesome food. At mealtimes students were requested to separate food waste into bowls for landfill and compost, the compost being returned to the walled garden. The bowls for each day were weighed and published on a sheet in dining hall. Next to these was an information sheet entitled *“Food at Oaklands”* which included the following information for all to read:

“Oaklands is working towards improving the quality of meals for you and reducing environmental impact.

We are making progress with:

Food leadership: with our whole centre approach and food policy

Food quality and provenance: using seasonal, fresh, local and organic ingredients where possible

Food education: offering growing, farm visit and cooking opportunities

Food culture and community involvement: improving the dining experience and consulting with our users.”

(Source: Dining Room Noticeboard)

Dave (the Chef) was proud of his use of the walled garden, for instance by incorporating vegetables as hidden ingredients in items such as his chocolate and beetroot cake. This point was also specifically highlighted in bold type on the daily menu sheets distributed on each table:

“Oaklands uses seasonal fresh, local and organic ingredients where possible.

Fruit and vegetables grown in our own Victorian walled garden are included in most of our meals.”

(Source: Dining Table Menu Cards)

He acknowledged that the major use of the produce was for soups, before expressing some irony over the fact that most of the fruit and vegetables grown were ready in July and August, when the centre was actually closed for the school summer holidays. Dave believed that meals were a significant part of the overall student experience, so he strategically selected the menus. This entailed serving something familiar on the first night (*"Shepherd's pie with seasonal vegetables"*), before: *"...we hit them with the slightly vegetarian dishes on Tuesday."* In fact there were two non-meat evening meals during the week (*"vegetable fattee and homemade cheese"* and *"tomato pizza with potato wedges"*). Whilst this was perhaps a strategic attempt to change attitudes about healthy food, it was not necessarily appreciated by all the students. Hugh commented in relation to the Tuesday evening meal: *"It's ridiculous, we had this vegetarian meal. Everyone was so annoyed and hungry."* During Wednesday dinner (*"homemade chicken and vegetable pie with roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables"*) there was a lengthy discussion over the issue of portion sizes, which were universally agreed to be too small by all on my table. Dave seemed to be aware of the clamour for larger portions but believed he was catering for this, commenting to me: *"It's more like catering for a party of adults with this lot."* He felt a strong responsibility for cooking things that the students would like, believing that his experience enabled him to: *"...get a feel for what goes down well."* He also pointed out that there was always food available to eat: *"...things like marmite, jam, honey and bread so they can make themselves a sandwich any time...and there is always fruit too."* There were two vegetarians on the trip, both of whom were particularly unimpressed by the vegetarian provision (*"Shepherdess pie with seasonal vegetables"* on the Monday and *"vegetable pie with roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables"* on the Wednesday). One commented: *"The vegetarian options are a joke, it is basically just more vegetables instead of meat."* Not all students were critical of the food though; Rose appreciated the menu and felt a personal benefit from the healthy eating ideals of the centre: *"I feel healthy. Normally I make my own tea at home and I just get something out of the microwave, with chips, but here is all vegetables from the garden – fresh produce. I still miss crisps though!"*

The Centre Planning Guide, provided to the visiting teachers at the induction meeting, also gave significant coverage to the issue, with two pages (out of

twenty) devoted to “*Catering Arrangements.*” Whilst this included practical information on routines and procedures, I felt that significant emphasis was placed upon linking healthy eating to sustainability. The opening paragraphs set the tone for this, with an emphasis upon their ideology: “*Food is the key driver in our Sustainable Centre...As part of our food policy we serve fresh, nutritious and enjoyable food produced with animal welfare, the environment and the local economy in mind*” (Course Planning Guide, page 2). Bruce explained to me his view of the centre’s approach: “*As a field study centre we try to model best practice in terms of sustainability to schools and to help visiting students to make the right decisions.*” Emma offered her perspective during an interview: “*We would rather it be subliminal and it be there around them rather than ramming it down their throats. We will try to build in the word sustainable and get them thinking about composting, but nothing too intense. Just little things we can show them that they might go home and do.*” Dan, a self-confessed environmentalist, was mildly critical of the approach of the centre: “*I don’t feel that they hammer sustainability at all; it’s more ecology, it’s quite old fashioned. We are much more progressive in school – we are an eco-school.*” Paul concurred that the sustainability agenda was not as strong at Oaklands as it was in school, attributing this to Dan’s passion about the environment: “*Mr Halls is really passionate about that stuff and it rubs off. Most of us have chosen Geog anyway because we have an interest in the environment and things like that.*”

There seemed to be acceptance, and some support, for issues of environmental sustainability, but there was less enthusiasm about embracing healthy eating. Dave was conscious of his role in contributing to a positive experience, but not all students appreciated his efforts over menu choice or portion size.

Perceptions on Shared Adversity

Whilst the issue of food evoked some murmurings of dissatisfaction, I observed other aspects of the visit in which adversity was experienced and discussed more overtly. Sometimes this was tinged with humour, whilst on other occasions I sensed a perceived solidarity in response to shared adversity.

The centre provision, in particular the dormitories and the shared bathroom facilities, were far from luxurious. Even in the context of youth hostel standards, they did not compare favourably to me. Whilst clean, they were spartan, dated and scruffy, in addition to suffering from some evidence of physical neglect, with flaking paint and rotten window frames. Some students accepted the conditions with a degree of humour; I overheard Fergus joking about sweating in the night such that he could feel himself sticking to the “*disgusting plastic mattresses.*” Other comments I overheard centred on the bathrooms. Harry reported at breakfast on Tuesday: “*I went for a bath and it came out piss yellow... well disgusting*”, whilst on Thursday evening Holly commented, with a tone of desperation: “*I really need to wash my hair in a decent shower.*” On a similar theme Sophie added: “*I also feel really unclean – jumping in mud and rivers and so on and the bathroom facilities are horrible and we have to share.*” I suspect there may have been an element of unrealistic expectations here, but Dan explained to me that he had told the students beforehand what it was going to be like. Some, such as Tom, displayed recognition of this in relation to their assessment of the facilities: “*It’s not the Ritz for sure, but we are not paying Ritz prices.*” Others, whilst questioning the appearance, found the conditions acceptable. Hugh commented of the beds: “*They do not look that great, but when you sleep on it, it is quite comfy*”, whilst Rose displayed a broader perspective with her comment on the beds, feeling that they were: “*not pleasant, but overall it has been good.*”

The fieldwork itself was perhaps the most obvious example of shared adversity which generated tangible feelings of solidarity that I observed. Vegetation and soil sampling, on the exposed heathland during Monday afternoon, was a monotonous and repetitive data collection task in cold and windy conditions. The first student complaints that I overheard were at 3.30 pm (1 hour 20 minutes into the activity). The remark: “*We should be going home now. This is just ridiculous*” was greeted by great hilarity by the remainder of her group, one of whom commented ten minutes later: “*I’m so happy... I’ve never laughed so much.*” This perhaps demonstrates the use of humour to combat adversity and the power of group dynamics to derive amusement from difficulty.

On the following day, the collection of river data involved climbing in and out of rivers, interspersed with painstaking and detailed measuring and recording of data. Although dry, the temperature was cold (8°C), with a strong breeze and the water felt very cold through my wellington boots. The practical tasks and rapport within working groups seemed sufficient to carry the activity throughout the morning but by 2 pm, at the third river sampling site, I witnessed much less enthusiasm. The students seemed very lethargic getting themselves and the equipment out of the minibus. The long walk to the riverbank, carrying the bulky and wet equipment, staggered the group significantly and the mood felt sombre and subdued to me. Emma appeared to sense this too and attempted to inject some enthusiasm by splashing some of the students assembled along the river bank. In time the groups entered the river and began the process of data collection. The depth of the river at this site resulted in many of those entering getting wet above their wellington boots. Several, clearly resigned to being wet, proceeded to get even wetter by splashing their peers. After 55 minutes at the site Janet and Emma announced that it was time to move on. By this time I counted that twelve students were wearing some wet items of clothing, seven girls were extremely wet (trousers and coat both sodden) and a further three were completely soaked through, with water literally dripping off them. The temporary euphoria from the small scale water fight, turned to groans of disbelief with the recognition that there was a long walk back to the minibus, that they did not have a change of clothes and that it would probably be a couple of hours before there was any prospect of returning to the centre as their work for the day was not complete. The students moaned and laughed amongst themselves, but despite their obvious (albeit in part self inflicted) discomfort, they did not attempt to persuade Janet to alter the plans for the remainder of the afternoon. Janet explained to me, as we walked back to the bus together: *“They know I am not particularly sympathetic when it comes to the cold and wet, so they get on with it without complaining to me.”* As we passed two wet and struggling students she cheerily called back to them: *“This is what fieldwork is all about, getting freezing and soaked.”* In the minibus to the next location I overheard several comments covering a range of viewpoints: *“I’m starting to get really pissed off with this now”* and *“I’m so fed up with rivers – I just want to get back to Oaklands.”* Whilst I sensed a mood of genuine discomfort, equally I felt there was an

element of camaraderie and a willingness to see and share in the funny side of things where possible. In the row of seats behind me there was a discussion between Paul, Sophie and Ruth over the pronunciation of the word 'scones'. After several minutes of debate, someone shouted out from back of bus: "*Will you lot bloody well shut up about scones...it's making me really want one and we haven't got any!*" The whole minibus concurred with laughter. It was 4.15 pm when we finally returned to centre and the students were able to change and get a hot drink. At 7 pm Emma started the evening session by making reference to the conditions: "*Thanks for all your hard work in the field today. It's not always nice and hot, but we still have to do the fieldwork.*" Later in the week, when I asked students to reflect back on highlights, many quoted the river study. For example, Pip stated: "*The river study was the best thing we have done because it was active and fun and we got wet*" whilst Rose agreed citing: "*...getting wet in the freezing river.*" Catherine explicitly made a link between adversity and the impact of this upon relationships: "*Because everyone was going through the same thing, getting cold and wet and suffering together it is now easier to relate to each other.*" Mel aptly summed up her feelings on adversity over the whole week, whilst noting an ironic dichotomy: "*I don't like the food, not being able to do what I like, having to get up really early, having to work all the time and getting cold and wet, but for some reason I have still really enjoyed it!'*"

There were feelings of adversity exhibited by some students which served to intensify notions of shared experience amongst those concerned and these potentially served to foster and enhance community sentiments. These echo notions of a "mutuality of the oppressed", a phrase used by Williams (1985, p104) in relation to the hard and brutal traditional UK agricultural community. Obviously the temporary and managed adversity felt by the students contrasted significantly with the harsh agricultural existence of nineteenth century workers who faced exploitation, crop failure and burning and looting. However, despite the differences in scale, severity and timespan, the resulting emotions of camaraderie and solidarity were a common feature.

Individual Expression within the Communal Environment

In this chapter I have so far concentrated upon common activities to identify whether these may contribute to, or be regarded as, sentiments of solidarity. This perspective potentially neglects the scope for, and instances of, individual expression. Indeed this is a significant criticism of many studies of community according to Frazer (1999). Notwithstanding this point, Rapport argues that a community as a homogeneous entity does not actually exist, instead there are just:

“an assemblage of individual lives which influence, overlap and abut against each other.” (1993, p43)

In this section I attempt to focus upon a few examples of individual expression within the evolving community at Oaklands.

In a study focusing upon perceptions of community feelings, I am perhaps guilty of a pre-occupation with observing and analysing groups, commonality and shared associations. However, in being aware of the issue, I did attempt to focus upon individuals and individual expression as, or when, it arose and I noted that there were various opportunities throughout the week. During free time, whilst students were constrained by being on site, there was plenty of space for them to find room to engage in individual pursuits. For example, on Monday evening I encountered Bethany alone in the lounge practising ballet (upon entering I apologised and swiftly left), whilst after lunch on Thursday I could hear the piano being played in the lounge so I ventured in to see, whereupon I discovered Alice playing alone in the room. As I did not go into student dormitories I am uncertain as to the extent to which these were used by individual students as a private refuge during the week.

I also became aware of two particular students (in addition to James, who was considered in depth in Chapter 8) who stood out from the group in that they did not seek, nor seemingly require, the company of a generally stable sub-group of peers. Paul was a confident and outgoing student who displayed floating allegiances throughout the week and developed as an individual through the

communal aspects of the residential experience. For instance, he was comfortable talking to many students and appeared readily accepted by any group of students with whom he chose to socialise, or work. Paul explained to me that he had made “...*about twenty new friends during the week*”, claiming that the conditions had enabled him to: “...*speak to many different people who I hadn’t done previously.*” He displayed the confidence to work alone on occasions, and had the inter-personal skills to integrate swiftly. The flexibility, maturity and sociability he consistently demonstrated, across different contexts, drew my attention and he consequently stood out from the group. On Thursday and Friday the working regime (introduced at the request of Dan) involved individual projects, whereby every student was required to write up and submit their own completed project. There were a limited choice of topics, a free choice of workspace and the option to work in groups if desired. I sensed that many students readily organised themselves into groups based upon friendships (both pre-existing and newly formed on the trip), before subsequently deciding upon which topic to select. This is an example of the point made by Gereluk (2006) whereby the wishes of the group can supersede those of the individual. I felt that some students, with a preference for one particular topic, ended up studying a different topic in order to fit in with a particular group of students with whom they wished to work. Abbie, however, (together with James and Emily) was one of only three students who chose to work alone. She explained that she selected this option as she wished to retain autonomy over her choice of topic and also because she enjoyed working alone. This decision prompted a remark of disappointment from Janet as, from her perspective, it served to illustrate that she had not taken the opportunity to integrate socially. When I spoke with Abbie on Friday morning she reported that, in addition to finding the fieldtrip enjoyable, she felt more motivated about Geography as a result of the week. She acknowledged strengthening her existing friendships (with Holly and Bethany), without forming any new ones. When the students sat their AS level examinations in June 2009, Abbie was the only student in either class to achieve a grade A.

Floating allegiances, preferences for working alone and the desire for space and privacy all reflect individual personalities. Indeed they also serve to reflect the internal diversity inherent within communities suggested by Calderwood (2000).

Concluding Discussion

In this chapter I have illustrated some common group experiences in relation to mealtimes and working routines, as well as a consistent, albeit contested, approach to fieldwork. The over-riding goal of data collection was clearly imposed by the teachers upon both the centre tutors and the students. Whilst the tutors accepted this somewhat grudgingly, in serving their customers (see Chapter 10), the students apparently did so unquestioningly. The students may not have regarded this as the prime outcome of the visit, but some cited individual skills they had learnt, whilst others acknowledged the broader necessity of preparing for the techniques examination. Nonetheless, the existence of explicitly stated aims and objectives (which were articulated by some students and met by others) represented a feature common with school life which, according to Gereluk (2006), encourages community sentiments.

The centre clearly subscribed to a sustainable and healthy eating agenda which was pursued via literature and practices implemented. Whilst Bruce and Emma saw this as secondary and subliminal, the centre Course Planning Guide gave it significant prominence. Dave, as Chef, was charged with implementing the food aspects of the approach through his incorporation of self-grown produce and control over the menu. He seemed to happily embrace this, but was also mindful of a broader responsibility to meet the needs of the visiting students and to bring about a happy community. On occasion these ideals appeared to conflict, as with his decision to serve two non-meat meals during the week.

There were different student perceptions on working hours, menu choices, size of portions, standard of accommodation and conditions encountered during fieldwork. To varying extents, and with differing individuals, these acted as potential foci for sentiments of shared adversity. Such notions were experienced by some students and according to Calderwood (2000) community is likely to

emerge through the participation of members in shared adversity. Sometimes these sentiments were manifested by extracting humour from the situation, which perhaps served to transform an element of the adversity into enjoyment. This seemed to be particularly the case when reflecting back. Indeed ‘fun’ was the most commonly cited sentiment attached by students to the whole trip, despite occasional, or in some cases many, elements which did not meet approval. This again supports the research findings of Amos & Reiss (2006) in which 97% of 423 residential fieldtrip participants sampled enjoyed the experience, despite 41% experiencing at least one problem.

The shared elements outlined in this chapter, I argue, created some common ground between all participants on the trip, whether they were actively willing or compliant out of perceived necessity. As Day (2006) argues, human beings have something in common with those whom they share experiences. Nonetheless this may not be the same as community where, according to Frazer (1999), members share something that builds a sense of solidarity. Furthermore, Sergeovanni suggests that in relation to school communities, connections must be due to “commitment rather than compliance” (1994, p58), although this is perhaps difficult to definitively establish.

Issues surrounding privacy and individual expression did not appear to be of primary importance to the teachers. The teachers, with their pre-determined aims for the trip, had a very strong influence upon events through their emphasis upon data collection and their desire to gel the group. Deviation from these aims by individual students was interpreted negatively. Both aims were actively managed through strategic and direct interventions by the teachers, whilst the operating procedures of the centre facilitated their implementation. Oaklands also contributed an additional sustainability agenda, although aspects of this were less readily accepted and it partially served to foster feelings of adversity with some students.

This chapter adds further insights to the consumer-client relationship, whereby the tutors were obliged to accept the wishes of the teachers and focus intensively on repetitive data collection. Issues around teacher control, previously evident in

the use of space (see Chapter 9) and managing relationships (see Chapter 10), also recur. Once again the teachers were instrumental in shaping the conditions that contributed to the construction of the temporary community. In particular they controlled the work agenda, over-ruling the advice of the tutors in order to achieve their desired and consistent emphasis upon data. Perhaps less overtly, but arguably more significantly, they indirectly managed some sentiments of controlled adversity. For example, they actively influenced the arrangements of the rivers fieldwork, consciously pressing on in spite of student discomfort, despite requesting tweaks for data needs. I suspect that had they perceived a health and safety issue, for example a risk of hypothermia, then they would have immediately intervened to modify the programme, but rather they viewed the situation as part and parcel of the fieldwork experience. As a by-product, the perceived adversity felt by the students and the resulting camaraderie solidified feelings of solidarity and represented a key element in the development of a temporary community.

Chapter 12

Conclusions

In this chapter I revisit my aims for this research, before outlining the broad argument throughout my thesis. I then identify the factors that I consider contributed to the development of community feelings at Oaklands. I also make links between my findings and previous research studies in the field of educational visits, before considering the distinctive contribution made by my thesis and the implications of my findings.

My Aims Re-visited

At the outset my original and over-riding aim was to capture and convey the multi-sensory experiences of being on a residential Geography fieldtrip. My evolving research questions were based around notions of, and factors contributing to, the temporary and fluid community. These focused upon the themes of space, relationships and experiences. In particular I look at perceptions around Oaklands as a bounded setting, the nature of the changing relationships between the individuals present and the extent to which feelings of camaraderie and group solidarity develop from shared experience. Whilst linked by a conceptual framework related to community, other underlying issues, namely teacher control, conflicting agendas and challenges to school norms also underpin these three themes. In undertaking a case study I was seeking to provide insights into the specific fieldtrip made by St. Catherine's High School to Oaklands Field Study Centre during the week of 9 March 2009. As such my thesis is based upon a study of the particular circumstances of that week and I am not seeking to draw broad generalisations about fieldtrips, nor significantly inform policy as a result of my findings. However I hope to draw some conceptual generalisations (Hammersley, 1984) which could perhaps be applied to other contexts and to contribute to theoretical understanding and debate. My personal success criteria are also to produce an account which is readable (Stake, 2000), with rich descriptions which give credibility to my participation and observations (Geertz, 1988). In terms of building upon previous research I am seeking to capture some of the unquantifiable and diffuse social interactions and

outcomes that occur on residential fieldtrips (Amos & Reiss, 2006) by adopting an ethnographic approach. Furthermore, I am also trying to investigate the nature and extent of perceptions around the feelings of togetherness shared by participants on residential fieldtrips (Lambert & Balderstone, 2010). Finally, in a broader context, I am exploring the value and contribution of an ethnographic approach in the field of educational visits and therefore hope to identify implications for both educational researchers and for the organisers of school visits.

Therefore, whilst I approached this thesis with a single broad question (what are the experiences of being on a residential fieldtrip?), my research evolved to consider threads based around community, teacher power, approaches to fieldwork and challenges to norms at school.

My Thesis

I argue that the setting, the evolving relationships within that space and the shared experiences and goals of the week served to create circumstances which can justifiably be equated with the sentiments of a ‘temporary community’. Moreover, I explain some of the processes associated with the development of this community and facilitated by its creation. My interpretation of community here is based upon the definition of Day (2006), around the requirements for a bounded area (the ‘entity’) within which a group of human beings share something in common and experience emotional feelings such as belonging (the ‘quality’). I suggest that the latter emotions could include the ‘intense group feelings of achievement and togetherness’ described by Lambert & Balderstone (2010), but equally I am conscious of the difficulty in providing evidence of this. My use of the term ‘community’ requires the loosening of certain characteristics previously associated with traditional interpretations of community, such as stability and harmony (Tonnies, 1887). It also relies upon interpretations that short term or temporary gatherings warrant use of the description (Bauman, 2001; Frazer, 1999).

I argue that the centre itself effectively created a bounded setting, being physically remote, and with restricted opportunities for interaction with the outside world. This in turn created a shared and common territorial area, which served as the basis for social interactions between the fixed group of individuals present. The resulting multiple social relationships resulted in various changes that I observed including the strengthening of existing friendships, the formation of new friendships and the retrenchment of existing friendships. There were also some social impacts for both whole group dynamics and individual students. I argue that there was a local social system, in which social relationships took place wholly or mostly within a fixed locality, thereby meeting a community characteristic proposed by Lee & Newby (1983). Furthermore, albeit in temporary form and small in scale, the multiple contacts between the limited group of individuals based around certain routine social practices possibly resonate with some parts of the notion of a traditional rural community (Newby, 1985). Evidencing community sentiments or feelings of emotional belonging is harder to achieve, but this is one of the areas where an ethnographic approach can yield insights based upon observations of the changing actions, words or behaviour of individuals. I also witnessed one particular incident which spontaneously galvanised the group and also provided the highlight of the week for several students. The aerobics routine performed by Dan became a memorable and unexpected key episode (Mackenzie & White, 1982) which challenged student perceptions of his teacher identity. It also represents a 'fleeting and euphoric' community moment (Frazer, 1999) and an example of an 'aesthetic community' (Bauman, 2001) which epitomises the sentiments of togetherness from enjoyment (and even disbelief) at a shared spontaneous experience. Whether one such moment against a backdrop of bounded multiple relations and shared experiences equates to community could perhaps be contested. Equally, whilst this was an impromptu event, the broader experience was strongly influenced by the agenda of the teachers leading the trip, perhaps suggesting a consciously created community.

My suggestions of community sentiments are problematic in a variety of respects. Some students hinted at, whilst others explicitly referred to, expediency as a motive for their behaviour. Consequently any of my perceptions of harmony,

co-operation and common endeavour may in fact have been a superficial gloss, deployed in order to make the experience more bearable rather than reflecting deeply held sentiments. This raises the issue over whether the behaviour and feelings I observed were the result of commitment or compliance. It also links to points raised about the likely permanence of impacts resulting from the fieldtrip. All three teachers tended to feel, perhaps optimistically, that changes in group dynamics, motivation and behaviour would be permanent. Several students focused upon impacts related to discovering a different identity of their teachers, but assumed that back in school their 'usual' teacher identity would return. The former views held by the teachers perhaps related to perceptions about the Oaklands 'magic', tied up in romanticised notions about escaping to a "*bubble*" (Georgina), a "*little cocoon*" (Dan) or "*your own private country estate*" (Dan). Some students on the other hand interpreted the conditions less favourably, in terms of isolation, a lack of privacy or a loss of freedom.

Furthermore, any conclusions I draw are potentially undermined by issues relating to the reliability of my data. Such issues are not just particular to my research however, but are common to many ethnographic studies. Capturing multiple perspectives was a challenging task which was compounded by the shifting perceptions held by individuals. Observations were perhaps skewed by what I chose to focus upon and in turn this may have been influenced by my previous experiences as a teacher and/or a visitor to Oaklands. Problems with access, for example to student dormitories and the tutors' staff room (the 'snug'), potentially deprived me of a valuable source of data. My attempts to manage field relations could have influenced informants' perceptions of me, oral data may have been a narrative crafted specifically for my benefit, whilst my very presence at Oaklands may have distorted proceedings there. Nonetheless I have sought to identify and emphasise these issues throughout my thesis, rather than concealing them, by making myself a visible character and narrator throughout.

Community Forming Factors

I am aware that my arguments around temporary community sentiments developing at Oaklands could be contested. Therefore in this section I approach

the issue from a different perspective and seek to examine the factors and processes which, I argue, contributed to this temporary community. I suggest that a variety of factors combined to enhance the development of community feelings at Oaklands. Some of these appeared to occur naturally, whilst others were perhaps a result of managed circumstances. I am not suggesting that such conditions were necessarily strategically manipulated with the prime intention of generating a community, but that in implementing other agendas circumstances conspired to foster such sentiments.

Space

Gereluk (2006) suggests that the organisation of space can influence the cultivation of community feelings and I argue that this occurred at Oaklands. Dormitories provided private locations for some informal student socialising and this was cited as a highlight of the trip by several students. Communal spaces, in particular the fireplace, the library and the lounge (on different and separate occasions), acted as the setting for significant social networking. Teachers did not seem to actively pursue a consistent strategy based around the use of space. Through dormitory arrangements they directly sought to manage the allocation of space, but in relation to project work the spatial impacts were perhaps more a consequence of their broader agenda to improve motivation for the task. The free choice of work spaces for projects was associated with the opportunity for students to challenge territorial rules, for example by using the visiting teachers' staff room, or by actively creating their own space as with 'the lads' in the library. This latter example also links to the blending of time that occurred, whereby the boundaries between work and leisure became blurred, creating a sense of informality.

Informality

The importance of an informal atmosphere in creating community feelings within schools has been emphasized by Sergeovanni (1996) and I suggest that this also happened at Oaklands. Informality around working arrangements (including where, when and how work was done) and behavioural expectations (such as greater tolerance and the opportunity to successfully challenge certain rules) contrasted with norms from school. Challenges to established teacher identities,

whereby new and different sides to their personality emerged, were associated by some students as contributing to the fun of the week. Perhaps surprisingly, fun was also an emotion attached by some students to feelings of adversity.

Shared Adversity

Williams (1985) casts doubt upon idealised notions of the traditional English rural community, but suggests that commonality was likely to develop around a “mutuality of the oppressed” (ibid, p104) based upon shared adversity. At Oaklands various students perceived aspects of adversity in respect of the accommodation, food, weather or working conditions in the field. However, such references were quite often linked with humorous exchanges, which may have been another manifestation of coping strategies. As sentiments held by several students concurrently, I suggest they represented mixed emotional responses which hint at a sense of togetherness. However, exposure to adversity was in part controlled by the teachers who had the power, for example, to decide when conditions necessitated, or when work completion warranted, returning back to the centre. As such I suggest that teacher control was another important community forming factor which I explore in the next section.

Teacher Power

The teachers controlled and indirectly shaped the evolving community at Oaklands through the implementation of various rules and decisions. Procedures around the use of space (e.g. via the signing out of recreational equipment) effectively gave them a powerful motivational influence over some students, whilst also furnishing them with a partial oversight into who was doing what, when and where. More significantly, they overtly adopted social engineering to meet their desired aim of gelling the group through the allocation of dormitories and the restriction of external influences (TV and wi-fi), the latter in order to “*enforce socialising*” in the words of Janet. This added to the intensity of the bounded setting and focused students upon developing face to face relationships with their peers, rather than escaping to virtual communities. A pre-occupation with this agenda conflicted with desires for freedom and scope for individual expression favoured by some students. A further area in which teacher power

was exerted, this time over the centre tutors, was in relation to the work undertaken by the students.

Work

Completion of the work was perceived by many students as a common and fixed agenda, perhaps again linked to established norms from school. The particular emphasis upon detailed (and sometimes painstakingly repetitive) data collection was at the request of the teachers, in particular Dan and Janet. They, in turn, felt this was the best preparation for the forthcoming skills examination, for which they felt accountable to the students and their parents. The seemingly united goal (from the student perspective) in fact masked significant differences between the teachers and the centre tutors in relation to fieldwork content, approach, outcomes and accountabilities. The tutors questioned the pre-occupation with data, allocating so much time to a project write-up and the prescriptive manner in which the project was framed. However, some students appreciated the informal working conditions under which it was completed, which contributed to blending and informality. The tutors, despite criticising the data-intensive, hypothesis testing approach adopted (claiming to favour open ended ‘discovery’ or ‘sensory fieldwork’ in the classification of Job, 1999 – see Chapter 5), relied upon generic worksheets and seemed inflexible in response to some demands for deviation from their usual practices. This also relates to a larger methodological issue, whereby ethnography reveals differences between what people do compared to what they may say, or believe, they do. In many respects Dan assumed the identity of the customer and was able to secure his wishes to the occasional frustration of Bruce, the Lead Tutor. Accompanying the student focus upon data was an underlying subliminal agenda of sustainability projected by the centre, which served to create a further common goal, although not all students embraced this. For many students their primary objective was simply to have fun. Nonetheless, common goals (or a perception of common goals) and experiences are important community forming elements according to Calderwood (2000) and I argue these features were also present during the week at Oaklands.

In this section I argue that use of space, informality, shared adversity, teacher influence and a projected common purpose all potentially contributed to developing the temporary community at Oaklands.

Links to Research on Educational Visits

Throughout this thesis I have thrown up findings which support previous research studies on educational visits. Most categorically, I can perhaps suggest that the vast majority of students (thirty-five out of the thirty-six directly expressed this to me) felt that the fieldtrip was ‘fun’, supporting the study of (Cook, 2008). I can cite some instances where there were improvements in group cohesion, a point also identified by Farnham & Mutrie (1997). For certain groupings of students and individuals I can identify improved peer relationships (Nundy, 1999), whilst I have presented lots of material which relates to the changing relationships between students and their teachers (Dillon et al, 2005). Other characteristics that I cite include examples of improved motivation (Amos & Reiss, 2006; Nundy, 1999), camaraderie (Bell, 2005) and new friendships (Amos & Reiss, 2006). I also argue that my thesis provides some detailed insights into the ‘new social situations’ proposed by Rosenthal & Lee (2009), where students are pushed beyond their usual environment and routines. However, given the timescale of my research and the relatively short period within which any lasting changes were exhibited I cannot contribute significantly to debates on the longer term impacts of educational visits. Nonetheless, I feel that my thesis does make a worthwhile contribution to the field of research on educational visits.

By undertaking a case study of a particular field study centre based upon a single fieldtrip, my research sets out to make a unique and specific study. Whilst there have been numerous studies of educational visits, I have found few that embrace an ethnographic methodology in the manner employed in this research. Indeed I suggest that the application of the methodology to the field is one distinctive contribution of my thesis. Much current research into educational visits has been pre-occupied with comparing pre-trip and post-trip outcomes, whether by questionnaire, interview, or a combination of both. By focusing upon the

evolving processes during the fieldtrip I have sought to capture the complex and multi-faceted nature of the residential fieldtrip experience. This approach has enabled me to explore the complexities and contradictions within my data, retaining and analysing them, rather than seeking to resolve them. I have been able to capture and analyse, for example, the multiple and changing priorities of the teachers, the conflicting and contradictory perspectives of field study centre staff and the differing student opinions and perspectives on issues such as freedom, privacy and adversity. My continuous participation and observation enabled me to examine the evolving nature of relationships, perceptions and emotions throughout the week, whilst also capturing the spontaneous critical incidents that shaped community sentiments. I identify the potential for students to challenge and shape their own use of time and space, in a way that is not usually possible within the constrained environment of a school. Similarly, the opportunity to see a different identity of their teachers is a luxury that the intensity of the experience affords, in contrast to the hectic and focused regime of a school. In both these respects I am able to show the processes and impacts for particular individuals or groups of students. I therefore suggest that my research directly responds to the view of Besenyei et al (2004) who emphasize the difficulties in quantifying the impacts of fieldtrips. By adopting an ethnographic approach I argue that I am able to address some of the gaps in research identified by Amos & Reiss (2006) and Lambert & Balderstone (2010) relating to diffuse, non-subject specific impacts and the sentiments of togetherness associated with residential fieldtrips.

My Methodological and Conceptual Contribution

I contend that my thesis also contributes to knowledge in the field of sensory ethnography, by embracing some of the “emergent methods” (2009, p9) identified by Pink, in an attempt to:

“bring researchers and their audiences close to other people’s multi-sensory experiences, knowing, practice, memories and imaginations.”
(ibid, p132)

I sought to achieve this with my sensory engagement throughout the field research, my approach to data analysis and through my text construction. My

understandings and perceptions were often informed by fully engaging in numerous activities with the participants on the fieldtrip. These entailed many multi-sensorial activities including the variety of different Geography fieldwork tasks themselves and the related follow-up data analysis. I also participated in leisure time activities such as table tennis, rounders and socialising around the fireplace, communal activities including mealtimes, and informal social time such as travelling to sites in the minibus, or walking between locations, sometimes whilst carrying equipment. In sharing such embodied practices, I feel that my own experiences assisted in developing a shared empathy with my informants, such that I too, for example, felt on occasions cold, bored, frustrated or buoyed by a sense of camaraderie. Such emotions would not necessarily always be visible to an observer, but they served to provide me with meanings and insights, which also sometimes offered explanations for subsequent comments or events. Consequently my own experiences assisted in my understanding of the experiences of others and also added a further dimension to my data triangulation. I was not merely gathering data by observing others, but was knowing and understanding through participation and by immersing myself in the sensory sociality of the residential experience. Furthermore, I feel that being an active participant assisted with my assimilation into the evolving community, removing potential barriers between myself, as the researcher, and the other fieldtrip participants. Without consciously contriving to focus systematically upon all five senses, I believe that my immersed approach, together with sensitivities to my own feelings and those of others, resulted in inter-connected reference to all senses. Moreover, through direct and sustained living with others in this communal setting, I felt a spatial affinity and a sense of belonging within a shared sense of place. In all these respects I suggest that I engaged with my research participants, building understanding and knowledge based upon embodied, emplaced, empathetic and multi-sensory shared experiences.

However, having experienced the richness of the multi-sensory experience my challenge was to accurately represent this through text, in a way that could bring the intense and fluid sense of community to life. My fieldnotes were often scribbled down in what I perceived to be opportune moments although I was

usually poised to recall and jot down potential verbatim quotes. I also subsequently found that the strength of my emotional engagement at the time enabled me to re-live (often quite vividly) the multi-sensory experiences in my mind, when re-reading my fieldnotes. My task, therefore, was to convey these emotions to the reader through the resulting thesis text, a task complicated by the fact that it must primarily be an academic piece of writing. To engage the reader in ways that are sensorial and empathetic I chose to open my thesis with three chapters of ethnographic rich description, unburdened by academic conventions such as referencing. I also adopt literary conventions associated with fiction, developing characters, plots and settings (Richardson, 1997), in a conscious attempt to enhance readability and to furnish the mind of the reader with images of the real lived experience.

“The task of the sensory ethnographer is in part to invite her or his reader or audience to imagine themselves into the places of the...represented.”
(Pink, 2009, p42)

From this contextual backdrop, (and after providing methodological, theoretical and conceptual literature reviews), I strategically aim to engage the reader with my analytical interweaving of evocative description, reflexive commentary and conceptual discussion in the analysis chapters²¹. As such, I have sought to construct a thesis in which the embodied experiences of participants generate visual ‘figments’ (Ingold, 2010) in the mind of the reader.

I also argue that my research gives support to the viability of undertaking immersed and focused ethnographic research over a short and condensed timespan. However, the condensed period of data collection removed from my perspective any lingering or evolving processes from school, leaving me with what could be seen as an isolated snapshot. Equally, despite the interviews three weeks after the visit, my chosen approach and design prevented detailed consideration of longer term lasting impacts arising from the fieldtrip. Issues over the perceived permanence of changes observed on the trip arose through my data and this required me to construct the case study beyond the perhaps obvious and assumed spatial and temporal boundaries of the particular week. This perhaps raises into question whether framing my research as a case study was

²¹ Chapter 8, 9, 10 and 11.

helpful, or even whether it has restricted my ambitions by initially imposing such boundaries? However, I argue that the idea of a truly bounded 'case study' is perhaps less relevant now, in postmodern times, than previously when we were more inclined to believe in the possibility of self contained research sites or in one 'grand narrative'. However, in seeking to develop as full an understanding as possible of the particularity of a single field trip, I feel my case study framing helped me to focus upon the task of data collection. I was conscious that there would not be a second opportunity to undertake further or subsequent observations beyond the trip itself. I also felt able to manipulate the boundaries of the case in order to consider short term effects but feel that the time and word constraints imposed by an academic thesis were an important factor in restricting my exploration of longer term impacts.

Moreover, by employing notions of 'community' as my conceptual framework I am perhaps also contributing a nuanced interpretation of that concept. Indeed my perspective and understanding of 'community' changed during this research, away from one informed by my Geographical understanding of the traditional English rural community. The Oaklands community did not exhibit the qualities of homogeneity, harmony nor stability, inherent in such traditional interpretations of the concept. Rather, I feel that my research provides an insight into the differences, disagreements and diversity that are inherent within a group of individuals. I also capture the changing reactions of individuals over time, for example, as the need for coping strategies increased and waned throughout the week. Nor do I suggest that community sentiments at Oaklands manifested themselves as a 'given' of shared living, although I support the established assertion that shared adversity is an important factor in developing solidarity and camaraderie. I argue that, under specifically managed circumstances, conditions akin to a bounded setting can be created in the short term, given a physically isolated location. I also demonstrate how community is actively constructed by the teachers, centre staff and students, in a manner that is not visible in a more permanent educational community such as a school. Finally my research reveals that community is still a relevant concept, in a temporary and fluid form.

Opportunities

Building upon both my approach and findings, there are perhaps opportunities for further research. There is obvious scope for further consideration of the longer term impacts of residential visits which I only touch upon briefly within this thesis. Secondly I suggest that it would be interesting to undertake a similar study, but under circumstances when there was no active management to create or intensify the bounded setting, for example without restrictions on internet access. I believe that research into ‘sensory’ and/or ‘discovery fieldwork’ (Job, 1999) using an ethnographic approach would not only be interesting, but would also fill a vacuum within current research on educational visits.

For organisers of educational visits I hope that my thesis provides useful insights into some of the advantages that can be derived from a residential fieldtrip and how these could perhaps be maximised. These include a variety of social and behavioural benefits for students. Furthermore, the chance to challenge spatial and temporal norms from school can reap benefits in terms of attitudes towards work, with increased enjoyment, motivation and time spent. Also by providing situations in which established teacher identities are transformed, this can alter student perceptions and revise the working relationships with their teachers. I also highlight potential areas for consideration by prospective trip leaders. Issues relating to the desirability and feasibility of creating a bounded setting, the importance of communal and private spaces, the need to understand pedagogical perspectives and the impact of programme design upon social relationships are all such examples. However, for trip leaders of post-16 groups I caution against the micro-management of a visit and suggest that some of the most formative and enjoyable experiences are such, largely because of their spontaneity. Whilst fieldwork is a compulsory element within the school Geography curriculum, this requirement can be met by a day visit. However, I suggest that the broader educational benefits associated with a residential experience warrant the expansion and development of such opportunities, rather than contraction as a result of financial, bureaucratic, health and safety or time concerns.

The conclusion that I can draw with the most degree of authority is that the multi-sensory experience of participating in the fieldtrip to Oaklands did feel like belonging to a temporary community for me. This was despite my obvious outsider status at the outset. I felt welcomed, involved, enveloped by the intensity of the experience and united with others through common feelings and emotions (although I felt reluctant to openly declare these with others because of my role as researcher). I suggest that feeling and sharing these sentiments characterises my participation as a sensory ethnographer (Pink, 2009) and serves to demonstrate the embracing potency of the experience. On the Thursday evening my reflective journal entry recorded my feelings of sadness at the inevitable and impending break-up of the temporary community, linked to the impossibility of replicating the experiences of which I had been part. This thesis attempts to recount and analyse some of those irreplicable experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Example Student Workbook Sheets: Rivers

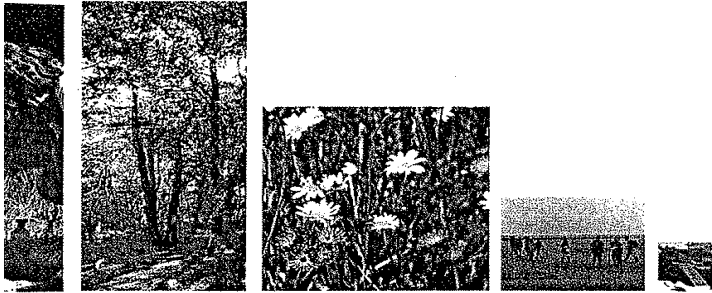
These sheets were written by centre tutors and distributed to students during the Tuesday morning classroom session, prior to undertaking fieldwork on Rivers.

Field Study Centre

Rivers and Management **A/AS level**

Learning Intentions

- To investigate how a river changes as it flows downstream.
- To use fieldwork equipment to gather data.
- To record information as field sketches.
- To observe methods of river management.



Site _____

Grid Ref: _____

☐ Middle Course☐ Lower Course

Wetted Perimeter (m) _____

Channel Profile - remember to start measuring from the left bank!

[illegible]

Summary of Results:

Grid Reference					
Width (m)					
Depth (m)					
Velocity (ms ⁻¹)					
Bankfull Width (m)					
Bankfull Depth (m)					
Wetted Perimeter (measured) (m)					
Wetted Perimeter (calculated) (m)					
Cross Sectional Area (m ²)					
Discharge (m ³ s ⁻¹)					
Hydraulic Radius					

Cross Sectional Area

$$= \text{mean depth (m)} \times \text{width (m)}$$

Discharge

$$= \frac{\text{cross sectional area (m}^2\text{)}}{\text{area (m}^2\text{)}} \times \text{mean flow (ms}^{-1}\text{)}$$

Hydraulic Radius

$$= \text{cross sectional area (m}^2\text{)} / \text{wetted perimeter (m)}$$

APPENDIX B

Pre-visit Briefing Notes

These notes were written up by Bruce, during the pre-visit induction meeting with Dan on 16 January, 2009 at Oaklands. Bruce retained the original form, to assist with planning for the visit, whilst Dan received a photocopy for his records. I was provided with a photocopy by Bruce on Monday 9 March, prior to the arrival of the group.

Aims and Course Requirements:

Saltmarsh - First afternoon if birds are ok
 1/2 point quadrats
 compare upper and lower marsh
 saltmarsh species diversity
 if cont. arrange programme of species richness / individual species
 Tues - Water Quality (Draw graphs in the evening)
 Benthic Index
 or River Exploration Geography (before dinner)
 ↓ Charred analysis if drawn by hand
 in the evening
 and Regolith traps - infiltration
 soil types / analysis → comparison evening
 soil is in use
 pm ground deciduous
 tree beating in both habitats - not worried
 Weds - Geography (Munster) - Come! about data - quick
 look at number of species maybe
 coast as fall back
 ↓ questionnaire
 environmental quality
 landscape mapping exercise)
 Evening Activities:
 lunch
 off site
 data operation

Please return to
(at least two weeks prior to visit)

☒ Bedroom List & Medical Dietary Requirements Form
☒ Nominal roll for staff and pupils including emergency contact details and medical information

Task sheet for each investigation in the booklet
 filled with
 forms for this - on the
 write up investigation - on Thursday & Friday.

APPENDIX C

An Ethnographic Case Study of a Residential Field Study Centre

Institutional Research Consent Form

I am undertaking a research project for my doctoral thesis into the benefits of residential Geography fieldwork. To this end, I would very much appreciate it if I could accompany the school group from:

_____ (school) to:

_____ (venue) between:

_____ (dates).

Research Remit:

- The nature of my research is upon the value of residential Geography fieldwork.
- The research is conducted in my capacity as a doctoral research student and any data obtained will be used solely for educational research purposes.
- Data collection will include observation, making field notes, questionnaires and interviews.
- Data collection may involve various aspects of the residential experience including meal times, free time, recreational activities and taught sessions.
- Participant consent forms will be completed prior to conducting interviews with any individuals.
- Parents and pupils will be made aware of my presence and role on the fieldtrip in advance.
- All participants, named individuals, schools and field study centres will be anonymised in the final thesis.

Nick Gee, School of Education & Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia

I _____(name & position)

of _____(institution)

agree to the participation of Nick Gee, from the School of Education & Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia, in accordance with the remit overleaf.

_____(signature)

_____(date)

This form was completed by:

Trip Leader

Governing Body

Head Teacher

Field Study Centre Lead Teacher

Local Authority Educational Visits Advisor

APPENDIX D

Pre-visit Information for Parents and Students

Paragraph included in the visit letter to parents

“Nick Gee, a lecturer and researcher from the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia, will also be at the field study centre with our group. He is investigating the value of residential Geography fieldwork for his doctoral thesis. His research will involve him observing and participating in all sessions and activities throughout the visit.”

Summary of points raised at the visit information evening

In addition to the letter, a more detailed account of my research (covering the following items) was delivered to parents and pupils at the Visit Information Evening by Dan, the trip leader. He briefed them on the basis of this list which I provided to him:

- The nature of my research is upon the value of residential Geography fieldwork.
- The research is conducted in my capacity as a doctoral research student and any data obtained will be used solely for educational research purposes.
- Data collection will include observation, making field notes and interviews.
- Data collection may involve various aspects of the residential experience including meal times, free time, recreational activities and taught sessions.
- Participant consent forms will be completed prior to conducting interviews with any individuals.
- All participants, named individuals, schools and field study centres will be anonymised in the final thesis.
- Parents and pupils are invited to ask questions about my proposed research. My contact details and those of my supervisor, Anna Robinson-Pant, are provided.

APPENDIX E

An Ethnographic Case Study of a Residential Field Study Centre

Interview Participant Consent Form

I am undertaking a research project for my doctoral thesis into residential Geography fieldwork. To this end, I would very much appreciate if you could spare some time for a short interview based upon your experiences.

If you are happy to participate in this interview, subject to the conditions specified below, please complete & sign this form, indicating your willingness to be involved.

Nick Gee, School of Education & Lifelong Learning, University of East Anglia

I _____ (print name) am happy to participate in a voluntary interview with Nick Gee, based around my experiences on this fieldtrip.

I understand that:

- The interview will cover issues related to residential fieldwork.
- The interview is conducted for doctoral research purposes only and any responses provided will be used solely for educational research.
- I have the freedom to refuse to answer any question and may withdraw at any point.
- All participants, named individuals, schools and field study centres will be anonymised in the final thesis.
- Extracts from interviews may be quoted verbatim within the finished thesis and research findings may also be used in conferences or publications.
- The nature of the research is upon the experience of participating in residential Geography fieldwork.

Signed _____

Date _____

Example Fieldnotes

1:30 back on minibus - seems to be agreed go to next site (Hue Farm), then
look at north for clay, before returning to [redacted] has clearly got his own way
Waiting on bus: our digital cameras - [redacted] - taking rough pictures on digital camera
talking about holiday experience, pet - new puppy, photo of
bedroom - moving home. - The trial in Soc Lane for 1 night
- I really didn't want to move.

3B 1-40 depart for site 3. 1-50 arrive [redacted] disembark - assemble in front of bus. Artem on bus covered by Ruler just in

3C - "Sir, will all of us can we get the equipment please." ^{BT} hand
"Do push harder now. Now we've had lunch." laughter
Students seen less eager - delay in getting out bus. Sense of apathy

3c. Water along fence behind barns to river site, just below
sluice. Log-dug out
snake & skinks

38 - 'Clear to water course' - explanation ^{drawn} ^{of} ^{the} ^{shape} ^{of} ^{the} ^{students}
leave pointed out ^{country} ^{all} ^{around}

1B - check dip to wading ground. Ears deep but lowered eye.
2 days about, with (in soil) digging worms, bringing sand nearby - cause
3B - Disturbance for [unclear]

As ^{water} ~~quartz~~ ^{concerns} ~~that~~ ^{river} ~~B. deep.~~ ^{"enter & check, finally decide}
should be at, ^{identify restricted water & decide} only 3 groups at a time.

Repts again reverts to 6 yrs

These crossing over, unable to do so without getting into over issues -
- assist shorts instructions as necessary

38/C Groups now well versed in using equipment; collecting data quickly & efficiently.
Land, splashing, strong teamwork evident.

Check with [redacted] - hidden work - arrive 8:15 hrs moving to check equipment.
+ prepare. Less of prep with A level group - slight reduction

1A thanks to ^{profits} this is "Getting lost is all part of the journey experience"
"We're all going on a inner highway ~"

[illegible]

270. general laughter & amusement over the prospect of being with
Cold house. Feels very cold myself, even though not at all wet
beginning to know / use a few proper "names" for the "tree"

When not measuring, drawing field sketches.
2-30 - groups sleep over; those not measuring sketch + see next
Bogartus ~~is not~~
- stuck in mud; absolutely soaked (striped black/white
wellies)

1. take photos of group in 4 poses.

240 - her active/inactive would be to stop at this point
the - her for all the without data, so groups were not
edges

5/6 mts before very solid. ending across river

happy to get totally sucked - splashing purposefully

At this stage, it is clear that
 none of the boys has actually gone in
 at this site. 2nd lot of groups & they
 already got were trying to do the water jobs for them
 & what if they should be

Would you still like to go back to Lohengratt? 1B
 (from the 1st time - clear she is not personally
 here)

decide happy "we can get data from somewhere" - not necessary

Talk this to corner this tomorrow.

Plant for planting first - "Shooting" short leads 1C
 running joke. - from earlier site. at this point

Repeat comments to about child - she responds by singing 1C
 to her. "We're all going on a river holiday"

- selects paper to pick up stones from river bed - one that
 is already wet

Look to "Jump in" - remembers shadow due 1C

2:45 "We're almost due"

still in discussion with group of pupils over the 3B
 importance of accurate data collection

"The closer & wider you become, the less accurate your
 data collection becomes"

Locals talking - Corner trip - get questionnaires quickly. Then get fish & chips.

lunch, its short
 - There are no corner than questionnaires and

Part 1 - Yes from chips & crabs Part 2 "Yeah, yeah, get, its short
 needs as well"

Part 3 - Need to show work needs to be done first

2.55 [redacted] we can go back to bus.

1 take photo of [redacted] pouring out water from [redacted] whilst [redacted] wearing them. John
laughs

"There has been no 'wriggling' it" [redacted] is really opposed to group

1A The boys are full of [redacted] but when it comes to it they're rubbish - comment at last that

1 girl noticed they had not actually entered the water at this site

3C taking to [redacted] or any [redacted] buses "They know that [redacted] & I are not particularly sympathetic when it comes to the cold & [redacted] so they don't bother complaining"

2.55 Depart from [redacted] from

3C "I've been preparing them for weeks about how cold & wet it will be, so they're ready for it."

3C "This is what [redacted] is all about, bringing it to life for them, getting stuck in & getting freezing & soaked!"

3.00 - drive over hump back bridge

- make reference to [redacted] look @ width, depth, flow.
look @ [redacted]

- ref to TV programme 'Coast' in which [redacted] appeared in front of [redacted]

talking about the local sea ports

APPENDIX G

Coding Classification used in Fieldnotes Analysis

This shows the coding classification that I used to annotate all my data, upon returning from the field. The concepts and themes emerged from the data I collected. (The original sheet was in colour)



Analysis Ideas

Notions of Community underpin all sections

Intro – Case Study of [redacted]

Concept 1: Relationships

Themes:

- 1A ✓ Teacher-student
- 1B ✓ Teacher-tutor – client/customer
- 1C ✓ Student-student – groupings; insider/outsider
- 1D ✓ Social impacts of experience – issue of permanence ✓
- 1E ✓ Individuals/individualism – in 3. ?
- 1F ✓ Different perspectives – change over time ?
- 1G ✓ Blurring boundaries between sch/home ??
- 1H ✓ Teacher control – social engineering ✓

Concept 2: Space/Territory

2A Themes:

- 2A ✓ Private/privacy ✓
- 2B ✓ Communal spaces – community building ✓
- 2C ✓ Freedom/restrictions (dormitories, eating, fireplace, working, grounds) – social engineering – in 1
- 2D ✓ Closed location/external influences
- 2E ✓ Bounded setting – influence on community building ✓

Concept 3: Common experiences/goals

Themes:

- 3A ✓ Induction/routines ✓
- 3B ✓ Content/programme – data, eco agenda ✓
- 3C ✓ Adversity/food ✓
- 3D ✓ Socialising
- 3E ✓ Opportunity for individ activity/individualism
- 3F ✓ Nature/environmental experience ✓
- 3G ✓ Isolation – physical & electronic – in 2
- 3H ✓ Closed location – in 2
- 3I ✓ Temporary & artificial nature of the experience – point
- 3J ✓ Use of time – social/work blurring & impact on motivation - blending – out

1A (✓ Example [redacted] dancing – in 1)

PR = Personal Reflection
/ Jack

APPENDIX H

Extract of Categorical Fieldnotes

This shows an example of my fieldnotes, typed-up, anonymised and categorised. I adopted the approach of typing up and collating my data by each theme (see Appendix G for a full list of the themes). This example is part of my data for theme 1C. The handwritten notes and numbers were subsequently added, to assist me with the internal structuring and sequencing of the material.

1C Student – Student (new social groups formed?)

Monday evening: variety of different groups undertake own activities in small friendship groups: Man hunt (10-12 female students), pump it up video (5 female students), games room – table tennis/music (8-10 male students) SOCIAL GROUPS

Sharing food/snacks brought from home (11)

Waiting around in minibus – looking through photos stored on digital camera – holidays, new puppy, own bedroom (11)

■ comments on ■x “Has really come out of himself” Doing Peter Kay impressions in the evening. Really gained in confidence. (12)

■ however, not mixed with anyone other than her own 2 friends – Jeff on Tues evening IMPACT OF INDIV

■ notes “Residential trips are mostly about personal and social skills and developing those as well as ticking boxes in terms of the curriculum” (3) OVERALL

As the week progresses ■ felt that the group dynamic had changed “there is rapport, they are comfortable. Things were quieter on Monday” (4) CHANGING GROUP

■ referred to the group of lads whom he felt could “go off the rails” but he felt that they developed a group work ethic for the completion of their projects. He linked this (2) LADS GROUP

to the blending of social enjoyment and work whereby they are able to take breaks to make drinks whenever they like.

■ “We look after each other and there isn’t anyone left out in the cold, I don’t think. It’s that tolerance as well, they’re one of us maybe you don’t like someone but they’re part of the group and there is no ill feeling” (4) CHANGING GROUP

Janet “You’ve got people who’d rather not be spending time with each other”

■ interview at school 3 April, one of language staff come up to him to say how much pupils had seemed to enjoy the trip. ■ said it was “the best week of her life”.

“It is also quite clear that there is that bond. There are still friendships groups within the classroom & they haven’t fully inter-mixed, but I have a general feeling” (12) CHANGING GROUP

■ “There is something very special about Oaklands. We tend to bring groups and they don’t know each other, they don’t want to work but then it all suddenly comes together. We’ve never seen this happen anywhere else” (8) CHANGING GROUP REACTION

■ Thursday “It has been a good laugh and it is good to bond with people and mix with new people” In the evenings “we come together, have a cup of tea, a bit of a feast and a chat” Do a game outside – manhunt. Watched videos in lounge, then chat in dormitories (6) NEW STAFF

Lads talk of "we'll rekindle it, we'll reminisce."

Feel friendship is even closer – amount of time spent together

"Hanging out in the dorms with your mates" – signalled as the highlight of the trip

"It was a real social thing, we made new friends there.. you don't really get such intense interaction just in lessons at school, so you sort of get to know everyone much better"

② LADS
GROUP

■ "I have really enjoyed working with different people, people I've never really spoken to before and I've formed new friendships...some people in the class I didn't know before...we always used to sit on the same tables.. but I didn't even know everyone's name but I definitely do now"

NEW
FR'SHIPS
⑤

"In the evenings we all get together and we organise something, like manhunt, it's a whole group activity...there are a few tiny little cliques who don't join in, but there is a large central group"

WHOLE
GROUP
②

■ "friendships have definitely strengthened" and "people who didn't mix before in school now mix in this more informal setting"

③
EXISTING
FR'SHIPS

■ "I socialise with a larger group of people than I would do normally. We also spend so much time together, sharing meals and so on and this has strengthened my friendships"

③ + ⑦
EXPANDED SOCIAL GROUPINGS

■ "We all help each other out with the work, I will ask people I would not have asked before the trip...and once we get back to sixth form I think the whole class will be more united"

NEW
FR'SHIPS
⑫

■ "I'm going to miss the evenings – sort of being with loads of friends because we all go back to our own homes and you never socialise with that many people at once usually"

Private jokes & shared experiences

IMPAIRS ??

⑧
UNIQUE
DIVERSITY
⑫

■ "We're all in such close contact, we've just gotta get along, keep smiling and make the best...it is only for a few days..if anyone is annoying you there is enough space to keep out of their way...we've all got our own little bedrooms so we can get away if need be"

⑩
EXPERIENCE

■ "We are all still in our old friendship groups"

NO IMPAIRS
⑨

■ "I wouldn't talk to some people but I talk to them here" "asking for help"

"I will miss it – everyone being together & messing around"

NEW FR'SHIPS
⑤

■ "some people are only friends here because they have to be – 'cause we have to live together for a week"

EXPERIENCE
⑬

"teamwork is required for data collection so it forces us to work together in groups and teams"

TEAMWORK
SOCIAL ONLY
⑫

■ "I think my friendships have slightly decreased as being together so much gives more time to get on each others nerves"

EXISTING
FR'SHIPS
⑦

14.

■ explained that he had very carefully allocated students to dormitories, mixing classes, but did not want to split particular friendships.

Context (1)

■ explains 2 classes; groups don't really know each other. Large group - 36 students

Friendships groups complex - St. Catherine's & non-St Catherine's students
■ - main aim is to gel the groups

(1)

Heathland study - ■ instrumental in allocation of students to groups. 10 groups of 3 or 4. Asks students to hold hands with who want to work with. Many not keen, but he explains that he expects them to do it. Students comply.

Strategic -
- work
Team (11)

On Tuesday morning, in the briefing session, ■ made an explicit point of sharing the medical condition of one of the students with the whole class, emphasizing the joint responsibility of everyone to watch her - especially when wading in water.

■ explained that ■ and ■ had impressed upon her the desire to "bond the group" through working together.

Context (1)

When I interviewed ■ on Thursday I asked him what his aims were for the visit. His response was "The aim was to teach techniques and to get them to write up a piece of coursework and to finish it by the end of the week." When I prompted him about his previously stated intention to gel the group he continued "we are hoping it will gel the group so that they will actually work better for their AS and we'll have better take up from AS to A2. After the fieldtrip and the weeding out process the A2 groups are just, you know magic. They're solid, they're enjoying it". He progressed to recall that one year, a group of Geographers came back to St Catherine's during the fieldtrip the following year because they had enjoyed it so much. One of them came into school the following year and "the really interesting thing is they're all still in touch with each other even though they're in places like Colorado and New England.. they all know what each other is doing.. and quite a lot of them are doing things related to geography".

(1)
Context

- implies - he felt part of

Y12 parents evening week before fieldtrip. ■ had taken the opportunity to talk to students in front of their parents. ■, whom he described as a charismatic boy who leads the others. ■ spoke to him praising his improvements in work and emphasizing how he had matured and a natural leader. ■ asked him, in front of his parents, to use these attributes to lead the group of lads. ■ felt "he agreed with me in front of his parents and he did just that"

trip.
Lma
Group (2)
sur
Eng

■ "It feels like you are part of a massive family" ~ whole group (4)

■ a "Everyone is together – living and eating together and it feels like one close-knit group" whole group (4)

■ – "It does feel like a big overall community, but there are sub-communities developing within this as well" When asked he felt that teachers were part of the community, rather than being a distinct sub-group. Unfortunately ■ came into the room at this point and overhearing the conversation: (4)

"I'll go away..Be-honest" but proceeded to hang about to listen to the response: group.

■ "I think they fit in better then I though they would"

■ "You are forced to socialise here. At school you sit in usual tables & then disappear" "I'm going to miss the atmosphere" unique culture (8)

"I'll probably try & keep in contact with a few more people and be a bit more friendly with them in school" IMPACTS (12)

■ "Everyone has joined together as a group. Everyone has pulled together. We all ask each other for help" whole group (8)

■ "Because of the fact that we have been told to mix groups and who we work with I have met new great people who I would'nt normally talk to" (11) overall - social env

■ "Everyone works together trying to achieve similar goals. Free time is also spent together giving more time to integrate and socialise and have fun" overall (3)

gap
writing